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VILLAGE PREACHING
FOR SAINTS' DAYS

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BY THE

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Sermons complete the Series of "Village Preaching for the Year," and, it is hoped, will prove useful to those who have found assistance from the Sermons for Sundays. Although the addresses contained in this volume are for Saints' Days, yet there is no reason why they should not be used on Sundays by those who do not preach on Saints' Days, as they also deal, in many instances, with general subjects.

S. BARING-GOULD.

LEW TRENCHARD,

OCT. 15TH, 1881.

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SERMON I.

THE OBLIGATION LAID ON A CHRISTIAN TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

(ST. ANDREW'S DAY.)

ST. MATT., IV., 20.

"They straightway left their nets and followed Him."

THE festival of St. Andrew takes the lead of all the other feasts of Saints, because he was the first to follow Christ. "Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea ; for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him." This is the brief account of the call of St. Peter

and St. Andrew as given by St. Matthew, but from the Gospel of St. John we find that this was not the first call. The first occurred somewhat earlier. St. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, and when he heard the Baptist proclaim that Jesus was the Lamb of God, he followed Him, but, says St. John, "He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

After this first introduction to Christ, Andrew and Peter seem to have gone to their usual vocation, waiting for Him to begin His ministry and formally summon them, and this is what He did, when they were fishing. They at once recognised Him of Whom John the Baptist had spoken, and they left their nets to become, under Him, fishers of men.

St. Andrew we may then regard as the first Christian, and for this reason he heads the glorious company whom we commemorate during the Christian year.

We also bear along with him the honour of being Christians, and being enrolled among Christ's followers, but whether we leave all for His sake,

or ever follow Him, is another matter. Let us now to-day consider the obligations laid on us to live up to our profession, to cast away all that hinders our progress, and to follow Christ.

1. Our duty to follow Him arises in the first place from the name of Christian which we bear.

The question arose in the schools, and was much debated by divines, whether Christ would have taken human flesh upon Him, supposing Adam had not sinned. A great deal was said on both sides. For myself I can hardly believe that such a glorious blessing as the Incarnation would have been refused to unfallen man, when it was accorded to man in his degraded condition. But be this as it may, one thing is certain, the atonement for man's sins was not the only purpose for which the Son of God was incarnate. St. Paul tells us that one other reason was in order "that He might present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish," (Eph. v. 27). And again, "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," (Tit. ii. 14). This new people, which are to be His glory and

crown, are none other than we Christians, this Church is His Catholic Church. It was to form the Church that the Son of God was born at Bethlehem, that He preached, and called His Apostles. It was for this that He endured such contradictions of sinners, such cruel sufferings, and a shameful death. It was for this that He spent forty days on earth after His Resurrection. For this He instituted His Sacraments and ordained His Apostolic Ministry. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," (Heb. xii. 2). This it was which sustained Him through His passion.—This, the love He bore the Church which He had founded, and for which He was born into the world and died on the Cross.

It is to this Church, to the company called by the name of Christ that you belong. Surely, then, this feast should stimulate us to act up to our vocation, to make our calling and election sure. The very fact that we are in this glorious Church, in this blessed Company, should stir us to strive with all our hearts to purify ourselves even as He is pure, to make ourselves worthy of the name whereby we are called.

II. Our duty to follow Christ flows also from our obligation to obey His commands, to observe His law.

God requires of all those who profess and call themselves Christians that they shall keep the Christian law, the link that binds them together. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," says David (Psalm xviii. 8). This was said of the old law of Moses, and how much more true it is of the Christian law!

St. Augustine tells us in his "Confessions," that when he was sunk in his Manichæan errors and in a depraved life, nothing attracted him so strongly to Christianity as the purity of the Christian law of life, and indeed, however great assaults may be made against Christianity by foes old and new, the charge that it is other than holy and pure cannot be made. Surely, then, if the law of our religion be so righteous, we ought to conform our lives to righteousness. It is not enough to avoid mortal sins, to keep from living gross lives. Our Christian commandments require more of us than this, more than the negative virtue of being not wicked, they require of us positive holiness. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."



III. Our obligation to follow Christ appears even more strongly when we consider that Christ is set before us as the pattern after which we are to conform our lives. "Be ye followers of Christ," says S. Paul, "as dear children." "I have given you an example," says our Lord Himself, "that ye should do as I have done," (S. John XIII. 15.) "Christ suffered for us," says S. Peter, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth : Who when He was reviled, reviled not again : when He suffered, He threatened not." (1 Peter II. 21—3.) S. Paul, moreover, in his Epistle to the Galatians writes, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ " (Gal. III. 27).

A soldier is expected to shew himself worthy of the uniform he wears, a clergyman to respect his cloth. Now, when we were baptized, we put on the uniform of Christ, and thenceforth we are expected to act as befits that uniform. The Apostle could hardly have put the matter in a simpler and more intelligible light.

You know there have been of old various monastic Orders founded, the Benedictines by S. Benedict, the Carthusians by S. Bruno, the

Franciscans by S. Francis, and each has its special habit. Well, just as when a man leaves the world and puts on the habit of S. Benedict, he undertakes to follow the pattern of the life of the founder of his Order, and to obey his rules, and the same, when a man puts on the Carthusian, or the Franciscan habit, so—S. Paul says—when you become a Christian, at your Baptism, you put on you the habit of the Order of Christ, and your profession is to follow the example of the founder, Christ, and to keep exactly His rule.

Strive, therefore, to be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect, leave whatever you find holds you back from following Christ. You have made your election, and are Christians : therefore, by your sacred name, by the obligations of the sacred law laid on you, and by the example of Christ, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily oppress you, and follow Christ in all godliness of living, not being satisfied with abstaining from open sin, but pressing forward to positive virtues, striving ever to attain to the measure of the fulness of Christ.

SERMON II.

FALLING AND RISING.

(S. THOMAS'S DAY.)

ST. LUKE II. 34.

“Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.”

THERE is no skill in falling. Lucifer fell from heaven ; Adam fell from original righteousness ; Judas fell out of the college of the Apostles ; Thomas fell in the midst of them, “ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. x. 12). No : it is easy enough to fall, any one can do that, but there is some skill in rising from a fall. It is not everyone who can do that. In heathen fable Antæus, a son of the Earth, wrestled with Hercules, and every time he was

cast down, his mother Earth infused such strength into him, that he rose stronger than he went down, fresh and vigorous to continue the struggle.

Nebuchadnezar fell through pride, fell a long way, from sovereign power to be a naked maniac, driven from the society of men, but he humbled himself, and rose again. David fell through temptation of the flesh, but he rose again after penitential confession. S. Peter fell through a triple denial of his Lord and Master, but he rose again through a triple confession. He fell through fear, and he rose with great boldness. Saul fell, struck to earth in his pride, and his zeal to persecute the Church, but he rose conquered, and eager to be baptized into that Church which he had persecuted. But why quote further instances? To-day we commemorate one who fell and rose again, the Apostle Thomas, who fell through disbelief, and rose established in his faith.

To fall, then, is easy enough ; but to rise after a fall is the great art. It is an art which not everyone possesses.

Lucifer fell and lies where he was cast. Judas fell, and went to his own place. Adam fell, and

all his posterity have remained, burdened with the fatal results of his transgression. It was the worst doom that the prophet could pronounce on apostate Israel, "They shall fall, and never rise up again" (Amos viii. 14).

On the other hand, the Wise King says "The just man falleth seven times, and riseth again" (Prov. xxiv. 16). That is to say, the just man, though he may fall through infirmity every day, yet is not content to lie where he falls, he will lay hold of Divine Grace, and use his utmost effort, and lift himself to his feet again. He knows that if he lies where he fell he will perish, his only chance is to stand up and push on. I have heard of a party in the Arctic regions on a journey, exhausted with battling with the snow, and walking in the dark. Some fell, overcome with weariness, and dropped asleep; their companions urged them to rise, and push on, to keep walking. A few made the effort, struggled to their feet and went further, and they lived, but those who lay, slept the sleep of death.

This is the great art in the spiritual walk, to rise after a fall. The flesh is weak, and though God's grace is strong, we can not always stand upright. It is necessary for us to know what we

should do after a lapse, and thus the fall and rising of St. Thomas will show us.

1. It may have struck you as strange that the Word of God contains so long a catalogue of the falls of the Saints. You would have supposed that these slips and serious lapses might have been slurred over. What occasion was there to record so much to the disadvantage of those to whom after generations are to look back as the great and holy men who have acted as their pioneers on the way to salvation? Why should the wounds be painted which grace has healed? Why should the spots be shown that tarnish their lustre?

An old Church writer (S. Peter Damiani) gives a good answer to this question. He says: "Let no man be proud in his state of grace, seeing Peter fallen; Let no man despair in his state of lapse, seeing Peter risen." What he said of S. Peter, I may say of S. Thomas, and of other Saints of God, whose falls are recorded in the sacred page. In this does the Bible differ from other books, it is written without partiality, it gives the good and the bad in each man. There is no pen-painting by idealising a man. Noah is drunken, Abraham timorous, Jacob

deceitful, Moses impatient, David unchaste, the wise Solomon weak, S. Peter stout in word and feeble in action, S. Paul and S. Barnabas falling out about trifles.

The reason why the Bible so honestly tells us the unvarnished truth about the Saints of old is that it desires this lesson to sink deep into our hearts, that the science of life consists in never lying down in despair when fallen, but in picking up courage, and rising to the feet again.

II. True faith demands of man two things, the assent of the mind, and the consent of the will. S. Thomas failed in both. The assent of the mind is given when the mind admits certain statements as true, which it is unable to verify, because these statements rest on the authority of God, Who is truth. All that which forms the basis of the Christian religion is incapable of demonstration. It is out of the power of man to prove whether those things which form the foundation-stones of the faith be true or false. They must be accepted entire, or rejected entire. If we wait till we have demonstrated them like mathematical problems, we must wait for ever. It cannot be done.

S. Thomas failed in this particular. He with-

held the assent of his reason to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Lord had foretold His rising again the third day. His word had been passed, and though the disciples doubted, it was Thomas alone who disbelieved. He refused to admit that the Resurrection had taken place in accordance with the divine promise, because he was not assured of it by the testimony of his eyes and hands. He expected faith to be identical with knowledge. He refused to believe what was not absolutely certified to him by sensible evidence. In another word, he abandoned all profession to *faith*, and took his stand on *knowledge*. The second element of true faith is the consent of the will. It is not sufficient to believe with the head, the heart must also share in faith: that is to say, faith must not be passive, but energetic. An intellectual acceptance is that dead faith of which S. James writes, "Faith without works is dead, being alone," or as the margin puts it, "by itself," that is, mental acceptance of the truth is by itself a dead quality, it must be married to a hearty adhesion of the will to make it active. When we accept the Creed, and call ourselves Christians, when we admit the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarna-

tion, the Atonement, Sanctification, and Eternal Life, we have a half faith only, and a half faith holds on to us with a very light grasp. It is the seed lying on the rock or wayside, it lies with the principles of vitality in it, but there is neither movement nor change going on within. The will must consent, the earth open and receive the seed, before germination can take place, and faith become an active force. In School, in Confirmation classes, in Church, the priest is ever striving to instil into you the true faith. He gives you the doctrines of Christianity, he can do no more than strew them in your heads, your will must receive them, or they will be snatched away or else lie dormant. Some years ago a head of wheat was found in the hand of a mummy several thousands of years old. Not one grain had sprouted. The faculty of springing and bearing fruit was in the grains, but they were not in a situation in which they could germinate. So with divine truths, they are put into your hands. How many years do they lie there, dead grain, producing no crop? A good many, I fear, because the will does not receive and quicken them. Now, S. Thomas fell from faith, not only in understanding, but also in will. He had heard

the promise of Christ, he heard the assurance of the Apostles, "We have seen the Lord." The two disciples from Emmaus said the same, Magdalen and the holy women confirmed it. Thomas, however, would not trust all these testimonies, he reproached them all with yielding to delusions, he remains stiff-necked in his resolution not to believe without ocular demonstration. He not only *does* not believe, he also *will* not believe.

III. But now that we have seen S. Thomas fall, and what the nature of that fall is, let us see also his rising again, and note the nature of that.

Our Lord appeared again to the Apostles on the octave of the Resurrection, when they were assembled together, and He said unto Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing."

Then, immediately, his doubt went, his disbelief both of heart and mind was at an end. He gave full consent to Christ's resurrection with reason and with will. He said, "My Lord and my God." As S. Augustine says, "He touched Him as man, and confessed Him as God."

He acknowledged the Manhood, risen and glorified, that it was the same Jesus whom he had known as his Master before the crucifixion, but now restored from the grave:—"My Lord." He acknowledged the Godhead, joined to the Manhood, by virtue of which Jesus had seen no corruption, but was raised from the grave:—"My God."

He made atonement for the depth of his transgression by the height of his confession. With the mind he acknowledged the verity of the resurrection, with the will he accepted the Risen Christ as his Lord and God, openly before all the Apostles.

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, let us recall what was said at the outset. To fall is human, to rise again after a fall is Christian. We may fall, because we are the children of Adam, but we can rise after a fall, because we receive divine grace to assist us.

You may have seen those who are sick in bed, have a rope fastened to the ceiling or the top of the bed, they lay hold of that and pull themselves up in bed, where, if unassisted, they must lie. We have a rope let down to us, it is Divine Grace. Whenever we are prostrate, cast down by sin,

lay hold of the rope, and pull yourselves up, and the strength will gradually return to you to enable you to walk with fewer falls in the narrow way that leadeth to life.

SERMON III.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

(S. STEPHEN'S DAY).

ACTS VII. 59.

“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

YESTERDAY we saw the Child Jesus laid in the manger. To-day we see Him with Stephen standing in heaven. Yesterday He was in the arms of Mary, to-day at the right hand of God.

How rapid a transition! Yesterday, suffering Himself, to-day, in the person of His martyr. Yesterday, in deepest abasement, to-day, in highest glory. Yesterday, coming to His own to be rejected, to-day, receiving His own for ever.

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not,” says S. John, and to-day we see that

“the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.”

1. The resemblance between the servant and the Lord, between disciple and the Master, came out very remarkably in death. When our Lord was dying on the cross, He prayed for His murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” and now, see! the disciple is dying, and what is his prayer? “Lord lay not this sin to their charge.” As the Master forgives, so does His disciple. As the Lord prays for His persecutors with His last breath, so does the servant. Christ had taught His disciples to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” His first martyr, boldly confiding in this position, gives perfect forgiveness to those who are crushing his head with stones, and at once sees Jesus extending His arms to receive him. Heaven opens to the forgiving spirit.

I think that one great lesson we may learn from S. Stephen is readiness to forgive injuries. His readiness is great indeed, it comes together with the injury. As the stones fly, so flies forth his forgiveness, as they fall on his head, his prayers

rebound in blessings upon theirs. There is no hesitation, no apparent struggle within, there is a ready-schooled mind, and the pardon returns as promptly as the wrong had come.

When the first Jesuits built a house at Saragossa, the mob attacked it, and smashed doors and windows with stones. Then S. Francis Borgia said, "Treasure every stone that has been flung at us, and therewith we will build a new house." If we would receive injuries in the same way, we should build with them a house eternal in the heavens. Every wrong done us would be forgiven, and each act of forgiveness would be a work of righteousness, a precious stone laid in the building of that house of ours, not made with hands, invisible but enduring, the edifice of our salvation.

But how do we behave when a stone is thrown at us? I mean when a bad word, or an ungenerous act, or even a rude look meets us? Do we not take it up and throw it back again? and then begins a mutual pelting, which goes on, and nobody knows when it will stop.

I know two sisters who were bitterly estranged for years because one wanted a window open, and the other wanted it shut. One said something

sharp, and the other answered more sharply, then ensued mutual recriminations, bitter feeling, wrath and separation. Christmas came, and neither would draw near the altar, each felt that she could not worthily receive Him Who came to bring peace on earth, and good will towards men, because of the anger and resentment she felt against her sister. That was nearly twenty years ago, and they are estranged yet.

I know a little town on the Rhine, so small, that nearly all in it are kinsfolk. Four years ago I was staying in a house there, at the marriage of one of the daughters to a young man of that town. This year I returned to the little town, and found that the father and his son-in-law and daughter were not on speaking terms. Not only so, but the town was divided into two parties, full of rancour against each other, the sisters sided with their father against the married sister, and would not speak to her, nor allow their children to go into her house, and the husband's family passionately took his side against his father-in-law. During these four years there had come two little children to the newly-married pair, and these were growing up without knowing their grand-

father or their aunts, and estranged from their cousins. What do you suppose was the occasion of this feud? Why this—shortly after he had been married, the son-in-law had taken away a beehive which he believed belonged to his wife, but which the father insisted was his property. How long did this last?—Four years after the rape of the beehive, the strife is so fierce that I fear it will last as long as the generations concerned in it. Think of the hard speeches! Think of the bitter thoughts! Think of the slanderous insinuations!—all bred of this beehive. Why, the tongues have stung sharper than the bees! Why, the bitterness could not be sweetened by all their honey.

Verily! instead of receiving stones, and throwing back prayers, Christian men and women spend their days in pelting one another with the hardest things they can lay hold of, and, too often, about nothing. Would that, of the stones cast at them, they would build the house of their salvation, instead of raising out of them a heap over their enemies, as Israel made a cairn above Achan in the valley of Achor.

II. “Vengeance is Mine : I will repay, saith the Lord,—therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed

him, and if he thirst, give him drink." This is the advice of S. Paul, and he adds, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If you attempt to revenge any wrong done to you, you allow yourself to be overcome of evil; on the other hand, if you give up all thoughts of chastising your enemy for the wrong he has done you, and leave the righting of your cause to God, you overcome the evil and transform it into a good—you use the stones thrown at you, to build up out of them the edifice of your salvation. According to the edict of your King, all private punishment of those who injure is taken out of your hands "Vengeance is Mine." He insists on acting as umpire in all disputes. You are too hot and impetuous to judge in your own quarrels, God seems to say to us, therefore I appoint myself as umpire. I will consider both sides, hear what each has to say, and decide according to righteousness, and punish in measure as the transgressions are wilful and unprovoked. But it is essential, when an umpire undertakes a case, that each side shall abide by his decision. Therefore "Avenge not yourselves—Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." The distinction between the Christian

and the Jew or the Heathen is this, the latter redress their own wrongs, the former leaves the matter in the hands of God. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (S. Matt. v. 44—5).

III. The reason why we are not to act as judges in our own case, and also as executioners of our own sentences is, that in all men there is good—the image of God, and bad—the corruption of Satan. In the blindness of our resentment, we overlook the former. We see only a mass of evil, of spite, anger, jealousy, hatred, and we will not believe that there is a good substance behind all this. We are so eager to attribute evil motives, that we fail to suppose any other motives can explain conduct which we resent.

An old rector of Beaumaris had himself represented in stained glass, and set up in the window of his church, with the inscription under it, "Nunc primum transparui"—Now for the first

time I am seen through. That is, just as a stained glass picture looks when laid out on a table, or when seen from the outside of a church, a mass of incoherent and inconsistent pieces, so does man when he is alive, and looked at by his neighbours, they see this here, and that there, and they cannot explain their meaning, or their relation to the rest. Afterwards, when the whole is held up, and the pure light of God shines through,—when God's judgment illumines it—then it is seen that there was beauty and consistency undreamt of, in the form. The light explains the puzzle, and shows order where we saw confusion, and beauty where we saw stains.

In every man there is some good. There are some traces of the Divine image in which he was made, obscured, it may be, but not effaced. As in the Church there are mingled good and bad, and the separation between them is not made now, but must be left to the future, and to a just Judge, lest the wheat should be plucked up with the tares ; so is there good mixed with the bad, good motives and bad motives, generous impulses, as well as those that are unworthy, and no man is able to distinguish in this life between them. “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until

the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts " (1 Cor. iv. 5.).

III. Once more. As we judge others, so shall we be judged ourselves. With what measure we mete out punishment to others, punishment will be meted out to us. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. ii. 1). "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more" (Rom. xiv. 10 12 13).

Yes, brethren, this thought should be ever present with us, and hold us back from judging those who have wronged us,—Are we guiltless? and can we with open face and without fear face the judgment of God? As we judge others we shall be judged. If we have been forgiving to others, we shall be forgiven. If we have been extreme to mark what is done amiss against us, God will spy narrowly into our ways also.

If we have been harsh and implacable, God will be severe with us. The servant who owed his lord much was pardoned, but when he took his fellow-servant by the throat, threw in his teeth the personal wrongs under which he suffered, and showed him no pity, then his lord delivered him over to his tormentors, and exacted from him the uttermost farthing of his debt.

SERMON IV.

SALVATION IN EVERY STATE.

(S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.)

S. JOHN, **xxi.** 22.

“What is that to thee? follow thou Me.”

DELILAH said to Samson, “How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lies.” She was right, Samson’s love for her was not deep and real, for deep and real love opens the heart to the one loved, and keeps nothing concealed from that one. Where there is concealment, there is no perfect love. And that Samson’s love was imperfect is made the more evident from what follows. Delilah constantly urged

him, and at last he told her the truth, but only to be rid of her worrying. "When she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, he told her all his heart."

How different where perfect love exists! There the whole heart is opened, and the entire contents poured forth; nothing is hidden, all is manifest. S. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and it is because of this love that S. John's gospel is so much richer than the other gospels. The others record the acts and words of Jesus, they give us an outside picture of Christ, but S. John's gospel shows us the deep mysteries of the Incarnation, we see in it wonders which are not disclosed by the other evangelists. Jesus loved him, and "He told him all His heart."

I. The special selection of S. John elicited the curiosity, if not the jealousy, of S. Peter, and of all the others. When the mother of the two brethren, S. James and S. John, came to Christ and besought Him that her two sons might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on the left, in His kingdom, the ten "were moved with indignation against the two brethren" (S. Matt. xx. 24).

After the resurrection, S. Peter, having made his triple confession, and received anew his pastoral commission, forfeited by his fall, is at once stirred by curiosity to know what is provided for S. John. He is met with the answer, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me."

The lesson taught by these words would seem to be, that each man should seek to follow Christ in that calling in which he is placed, and not be anxious to know whether he could do better in some other position, in executing the office, or endowed with the privileges, that belong to another. "Art thou able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? Art thou prepared to drink as much and as deep as I suffer thee? That is the only question which thou hast any right to ask, and that, thou must ask of thine own heart." God will give to each to drink, as He sees fit. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup," says David, "and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and He poureth out of the same," distributing to every man severally as He will; therefore be not troubled, "God is the judge, He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Ps. lxxv. 8. 9). God distributes to each as He sees fit, to each certain privileges, to each certain

blessings, to each certain trials, the wine is full mixed, bitter and sweet, as suits each, and each must drink the cup as it is put to his lips, for God gives him only what he is able to bear, He is the judge and not we, He putteth down one who would sit at the right hand in His kingdom, and setteth up another. "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that (1 Cor. vii. 7).

When king Ahasuerus made a great banquet at Shushan to all people, both great and small, he "gave them to drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse one from another" (Est. i. 7). So it is in the great banquet of life, all who are invited to partake in it are given to drink in divers measures, and out of divers vessels, but the red wine is all "royal wine," and the "drinking according to law." That is, God gives to all the mixed draught of bitter and sweet, of sorrow and joy, according to the law of His wise providence, to some more, or to some less, to the little ones and the feeble out of very small vessels, to the able and long-lived out of vessels very deep. But whatsoever they receive is "royal wine" prepared for them by God. "What? Shall we not receive good at the hand

of God, and shall we not receive evil" (Job ii. 10).

II. Nothing is more common than to hear men make their calling an excuse for the unsatisfactory state of their lives. They profess, and no doubt believe, that if they were in any other condition they would be better men, and serve God more truly. The unmarried says, "O, if only I were married, I would set an example to all of being a good father, or mother ; but now I have no settled home, am more or less of a vagabond, and pick up the careless and lazy habits of a vagabond. Let me be but settled in a house of my own, and with a wife of my own, and I will be a model to the parish." The married says, "O, that I had never compassed myself about with so many cares and distractions ; I had time to pray and attend church when I was single, I could give money then in charity, but now my time is taken up by my children, and my money is swallowed up by the expenses of a household. I am full of cares how to make both ends meet, and cannot think of anything else." The poor man says, "I must work for my livelihood, and I have no leisure to think of my soul, I must leave that to those who can afford the time. If I had enough to live upon without work, I would attend church when-

ever the bell called for public prayer." And the rich say that their position in society demands so much of them ; they have so many social duties, which keep them in a whirl from morning to night ; if they were only not so much in society, why, then, they could be more devout and God-fearing. All these excuses are idle. God puts to the lips of each the cup He has mixed, as He sees fit for each. When S. John the Baptist preached in the wilderness, a multitude came forth from the cities and villages to hear him ; publicans and soldiers, merchants and scribes, even Herod the King. Did he tell them to give up the state of life in which each was placed, so as to be freer to serve God better ? On the contrary, he pointed out to each that his proper course was to fulfil his duties in that sphere in which he was placed. To the publican he said, "Exact no more than what is appointed you." To the soldier, "Do violence to no man." To the servant, "Be content with your wages." To the king, "Give up thy brother's wife, and do no more evil in thy kingdom."

III. Look about you in the church and see what is there. There are vessels of gold and silver, and candlesticks of brass, there is stone

for the walls, and wood for the roof, there is silk for the altar, and wool for curtains, there is glass for the windows, and lead for the gutters, and iron for the hinges. O, what a variety of material combined to make up God's House ! Some very precious, and other very common, but all in their several ways necessary. "Ye are the temple of God" saith S. Paul, (1 Cor. iii. 17). You may see in this material church a figure of the Spiritual Temple of God, of the living Catholic Church. In it some shine as the gold and silver, others are hard and humble as the iron and stone, others firm as the wood. Some transparent as the glass, there are of all kinds, and each has his proper function, and his special characteristic and grace. S. Chrysostom very beautifully says, "If thou canst not be a precious stone, then try to be gold, and if thou canst not be gold, then at least stand fast on the foundation." If thou art a house-mother, and because of the cares and demands of a household cannot be so often at church, and prepare so diligently for communion as thou would'st desire, do what thou canst, go to church when thou canst, communicate when thou canst, "stand fast on the foundation." If thou art a labourer, and thy time is taken up so that thou

canst not come to the church and pray, then pray in the field ; if thou canst not kneel at the altar, hold communion with God over thy plough, "stand fast on the foundation."

I will tell you a story that is told by the Italian peasants. It is called the "Story of the Bad Sister." There was once a brother and two sisters, and the brother became a priest, and the eldest sister a nun, but the third married and had a large family. Now the priest and the nun were very devout, he said his prayers seven times a day, and she communicated every week, and both were much troubled about their youngest sister, because they hardly ever saw her at church, and when they spoke to each other it was about that "poor worldling." At last the priest could bear it no more, so he went to his youngest sister and he asked her how often she attended church. She said that she had not been able to go for many weeks, because she could not leave the baby, and the little ones who could just walk, and might go the fire and get burned. Then he asked her whether she prayed much at home. She answered that she always tried to pray when she rose in the morning, and went to bed at night, but, she added, the baby began to scream the



moment she went down on her knees, and she often had to pray, rocking the cradle with one hand. Her brother was much concerned, and he said, "My dear sister, I will attend to the children for an hour, if you will go to church now, for the bell is ringing." She was only too happy, and went off. After service was over she returned, and found the priest nearly distracted. "O, my sister!" he said, "You gain more merit by self-denial and patience in one hour with all these babies screaming and pulling at you, than I in a week of prayer. God is with thee, and will sanctify thee, my sister. I fear for thee no more."

After that the nun came to see the married sister, and she asked her whether she thought much about her soul. No, said the mother, she had only the children to think of, and they took up all her time, there were seven of them, and the eldest was only eight years old. Did she read good books? No, her whole time was engaged, and at night she dropped asleep from dead weariness in the midst of her prayers. Then the nun shook her head and departed. But that night she had a dream. She thought she was dead, and that her soul went to the gates of heaven, and knocked

and sought admission. Then the gate opened a very little way, and she slipped through. Presently her brother, the priest, died, and his soul came to the gates of heaven, and then they opened a little way, and he just managed to enter. Then one day, suddenly there was a burst of joy from all the angels of Heaven, and those who stood on the walls blew their trumpets, and those within struck their harps and sang, and the pearly gates rolled wide, and down through the darkness shot a golden beam from heaven towards earth. And lo! up that beam of light came the "Bad Sister," with her humble face lifted in love, and in her arms a little new born babe, in giving birth to which she had passed away.

IV. S. Paul says that "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." In the firmament there are many saints. If you cannot shine as the moon, then shine as a star, at any rate shine. If you cannot be a planet, be a little star, but try to be in heaven. Do not be discontented with what God has given you, do your duty, walk

along the plain road that lies before you. It is to the *wandering* stars that is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Let each live in the station in which he is placed, he can gain heaven from it. Whatever it may be, he can in it become a disciple, though perhaps not a best-loved disciple, of Christ. Each station is of God ; for each God has given His grace in sufficient supply, let each try to fulfil the duties of that station, and to employ the grace given him. Should God design to place him in another, then it will be done in a manner in which there is no mistaking the hand of God, and he need not fear then to follow where God leads the way.

SERMON V.

HOLY INNOCENTS.

ST. MATT. II. 18.

“In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentations, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.”

In the piteous narratives of the tragedies perpetrated by the Turks upon the Bulgarians, I remember one incident that especially struck me. It was in the letter of a newspaper correspondent describing a second visit to Batak some time after the massacre. He came upon a poor woman half starved, crouching in her ruined cabin, with two little bleached skulls on her lap, which she rocked and patted, and moaned over. In the butchery, her husband and all her

children had perished, and all she could recover of her own were the two little heads of her babes, and these she fondled and wept over, in dull despair. She had nothing to live for, no future. Rachel was weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they were not. I suppose that Bethlehem must have witnessed many such scenes after the tragedy committed there, the memory of which is preserved in this day's festival. Some of you may recollect the famous picture at Venice, by Tintoret, of the Murder of the Innocents, and been spell-bound as you stood before it, by the vivid representation of the agony of those mothers, and their vain efforts to screen their little ones from the sword. Some interposing their own arms and breasts in hope to receive the blow designed for their darlings, others seeking frantically to avert it by intercession, and yet others hoping to conceal the children that will proclaim their presence by their cries.

Now evening has settled down on Bethlehem, and the stars have come out in the sky. All night long there rises from the little city cries and moans, Rachel weeping for her children, and will not be comforted. Some mothers sit on

their doorsteps with the little bodies laid across their knees, and gaze down on their white faces, white in the starlight, and kiss the cold cheeks and lips, and if love could give life, would kiss the colour back again. And some are digging graves in their gardens, under favourite bushes or flowers, where their little ones had lain playing in the shade, whilst the mother had sat and watched them, sewing all the time at little garments for their tiny limbs. The garments will never be worn, the little limbs have no more movement in them. And some are leaning against the walls of their houses, with their cheeks wet, and their eyes turned to Jerusalem, to where they know is the temple of their God, seeking comfort whence alone it can be drawn. And some are crouched in mad rage, tearing their hair, their eyes burning as coals, and their lips pouring forth curses and blasphemies. They have lost all faith, all trust in God, He has smitten them so hard a blow that they turn and bite at His hand. The world is dead to them, love they will know no more. Only one thing remains :—they can call down imprecations on those who had bereaved them of their children.

It strikes me that Mary and her Child would

not have been safe in Bethlehem, had they remained there, even had an angel drawn his wings over the Holy Infant and hid him from the soldiers' eyes. Hereafter Christ, as a man, will pass through the midst of those who would take Him to the brow of a hill and cast Him down, He will pass through their hands, invisible, and the men who hoped to slay Him, will be frustrated in their wicked plan. It might have been so now. No need to have gone into Egypt, the Holy Child might have been protected during the massacre. But when the soldiers had gone, would He and Mary have been safe from the frantic bereaved mothers? Would not these have vented their fury on their heads? Would not they have found that the Child Jesus was the occasion of the massacre of their precious little ones, and fallen on Him and Mary, and torn them to pieces? The flight into Egypt was a flight from the frantic mothers, quite as much as from the Herodian soldiers. You can imagine, even if things had not come to this pass, that it would have been impossible for Mary and her Child to have remained at Bethlehem. The embittered hearts would have poured forth all their gall on her; her ears would have been filled with their

recriminations, and hatred would have pursued the Child. Those who did not vent their envy and revenge in curses, would have looked reproachfully at her. No!—Bethlehem was no place for them. The flight from it was necessary, and the further from these mothers the better.

I. There are two ways in which trouble may be borne, it may be borne patiently and prayerfully, and then it is a very angel of God bringing blessing. It may, on the other hand, be borne resentfully and impatiently, and then it brings with it deterioration of the moral and spiritual character.

You must have seen those who have passed through great tribulation, and they have whitened their robes in their troubles, they have learned patience, unworldliness, unselfishness, and perfect faith and love for God. The blow that has wounded them, has led them to the Good Physician to be healed. The thorns that have torn them, have brought them resignation to fall into the hands of the Good Shepherd. The axe that has lopped off their stray tendrils and wide-spreading branches, has made them produce fruit instead of leaves.

On the other side, you must have seen those



who have been embittered by their losses, who have grown selfish, cynical, ungenial, despairing or doubtful ; the more that is taken from them, the more they cling to what remains, and the more furiously do they resent their deprivation of what is gone. You may have seen characters which were once placid and amiable, become utterly unloveable and ruffled by some loss of means or some family bereavement.

Job was a good man, he was rich, and had a wife, and sons and daughters. One day, as his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, there came a messenger to Job, saying that the Sabeans had fallen on his cattle, and slain his servants, and driven off the cattle. While he was yet speaking, another servant arrived to tell Job that lightning had fallen on his sheepfolds, and the sheep and the shepherd were lying black and dead. Shortly after came a third, saying, "The Chaldeans fell on the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword." While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, "There came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house where thy sons and thy daughters were

eating and drinking, and it fell on the young men, and they are dead."

Then Job arose and fell on the ground, and worshipped and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I enter thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

In Job we have an example of one who bore afflictions rightly, whom they drew closer to God. In Pharaoh we have the instance of one who bore afflictions wrongly, whom they drove further from God. Moses performed a miracle before Pharaoh enough to touch his heart and show him that the power of God was with Moses, and not with the magicians, but his heart remained hard; then God began to smite him one blow after another. The Nile was turned into blood, he and his people were deprived of water, but "Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto Moses." Then came plagues, irritating and disgusting; the frogs, and the lice, and the flies, but they deepened the obduracy of Pharaoh. The blains broke out on the beasts, and boils on men, Pharaoh is tormented in his health, but remains unsubdued. The crops are smitten by the hail, and still the heart of Pharaoh

remains hardened. The locusts consume what was left by the hail, but the result is the same ; then the darkness overshadows the land. In the stillness of that night, setting in, in the midst of that day, Pharaoh might have been supposed to enter into his heart, to commune with it, and then to have felt that he was on a wrong course ; that he was battling against one mightier than himself ; that a bruised reed, God will not break, but He will bring His fiercest storms against the haughty and rigid tree that dares to defy Him. But no, Pharaoh is impenitent still ; then comes the severest blow of all. His first-born is taken from him, still he remains unshaken. That was his last chance of reconciliation. It was not accepted, and after that nothing more remained for him but death in the deeps of the sea.

II. And now, my brethren, you will all be tried, you will be called on to suffer in some way or other, and you will have to determine whether you will receive the blow as Job or as Pharaoh, whether it will be for your blessing or your destruction. It must improve you, or it must injure you. It will sweeten or sour you ; it will bring you very near to God, or it will drive you from Him. How then is a blow to be received ? In

a kneeling position. Always take your trouble at once to God, pour out your heart to Him, and seek comfort from Him, and from no one and from nothing else. Seek it elsewhere, and you will increase your disappointment. Seek it in Him, and you will have your tears wiped away.

This, then, is the first thing to remember. When you suffer, go to the right person to comfort you,—God.

And secondly, when you suffer, do the right thing, commit your suffering to Him, and ask Him to extract from it a blessing. There is some blessing hidden in it, what that is you do not at first perceive, and how to extract it you do not know. Leave it to God to do that ; He will, out of your trouble, produce your sanctification. Sufferings are sent on several accounts. They come as a punishment for sin, and they come as healing, but bitter medicines. They come as awakeners out of sleep, and they come to detach us from this world and prepare us for another.

David lost his child by Bathsheba, and he took his loss as a chastisement. Pharaoh lost his son, but he hardened his heart irrevocably.

There is a little mountain chapel in Tyrol, far

from the habitations of men, and it is a belief, or superstition, among the peasants, that when they are in any great trouble or sorrow, if they go to that chapel and ring the bell, God will comfort them. I dare say originally the custom was to ring in order to call upon peasant boys or girls, keeping their cows or goats on the mountains, to come also, and unite in the prayer for comfort for the afflicted, but now the idea is that the ringing of the bell, with the earnest yearning of the heart for consolation, does bring a blessing from God.

Many years ago an accident happened to a young hunter, he lost his footing and fell down a precipice, and was dashed to pieces, but his body was never recovered, the place where he fell being inaccessible. He was the only son of a widow, and she went out of her mind with grief. Her madness was very harmless, however, it took this form. At daybreak she went off to this chapel, high in the mountains, and rang the bell, and all day long the bell might be heard at intervals to clang—telling in God's ear that the widowed mother's heart was broken, and her brain disturbed, and she wanted comfort. This went on for years, the poor grey-haired, bent old

woman, as long as she had any strength in her, crept up the rocks to the chapel, and her feeble arms all day till sunset, pulled the bell. At last, one night she did not return, and when her neighbours went to seek her, they found her in the little chapel, dead, kneeling, with the dazed eyes lifted, but now sightless, and her hands clinging to the bell rope. At length God had answered the call of the bell, and wiped away her tears.

My brethren, you may learn something from that poor old woman, and that is, whither to go in your trouble—to God; to whom to confide it—to God; from whom alone to seek consolation—God.



SERMON VI.

TRUE CONVERSION.

(CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.)

ACTS IX. 6.

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

It is certainly remarkable that the Catholic Church celebrates no other Conversion of any of the Saints in her Calendar, except that of S. Paul. It may be thought that the reason of this is that she is especially grateful for the Conversion of him who was to be the great Apostle of the Gentiles, but who was first the cruel persecutor. He laboured more abundantly than the others, and it was due to him that the glad tidings were declared to the Gentiles, and that the Church

became indeed Catholic, or Universal, and was not confined to the Jews of the Circumcision.

This, indeed, may have been a principal motive of the Church, but I think there was another, and it—that the Conversion of S. Paul was one specially deserving of being held up before the eyes of men, as a specimen of true Conversion. To be converted is what many a man, may be, professes, but if he will look at the example of S. Paul, he will see how to be *truly* converted. To be converted is one thing, but to be truly converted is another. Conversion means a turning round, and a man who is going down a wrong road may turn round and go on another wrong road, or after turning round, may sit down and go no step further in any direction ; or he may turn round once more, and set off again along the wrong road he was at first pursuing. Conversion is not infrequent, but true Conversion is rare. S. Ambrose says that the result of his long experience was this, “It is an easier thing to preserve baptismal innocence, than to be truly converted from a sinful life.”

I. Now, in the first place, let us see what Conversion is.

Conversion, for such as are already Christians of some kind, is only necessary when Baptismal innocence has been lost. It is the recovery of that which has been let slip. In the Shetland Isles, the fowlers are let down by ropes over the edges of cliffs to the places where the wild fowl make their nests. One day a fowler was thus lowered, and he lighted on a rocky ledge, and at once set to work to collect the eggs and eider down from the nests, but when he had done, he saw to his horror that he had let go the rope by which he had been lowered, and as the edge of the precipice overhung the place where he stood, the rope was suspended in the air at some distance from him, over a frightful abyss of rock and foaming sea. But one course was open to him, to throw away the eggs and feathers he had collected, and leap outwards on the chance of catching the rope. Imagine the situation, the rope at a touch might swing away, and he would fall, and be dashed to atoms. However, he leaped, caught the rope, clung to it, and was hauled up. Now Conversion is that jump. The rope of Divine grace has been let go, and we have been busy about mere feathers, light trifles, and then we suddenly find ourselves at the edge.

of a precipice, below is the abyss, and eternal death. The only chance is to make a jump for the rope, and catch if we can. It is a poor chance, but it is the only chance.

Conversion is the getting ashore after shipwreck. If you want to go to Canada or Japan, it is not necessary that you should be shipwrecked, but you may be so, and if you are, you are lucky if you reach your destination by any means that offers. It is not necessary, if you are sailing for the Heavenly Country, that you should lose Divine grace, and that your vessel should go to pieces under your feet. You need not run on a rock or sandbank, unless you are a bad sailor. But if you do get wrecked on the reef of mortal sin, or stranded on the sandbank of indifference, you must get off as you can, in a boat, or lashed to a pole. Such escape from the wreck is Conversion. You may remember the account of the voyage of S. Paul to Italy, how that the vessel met with a furious storm which lasted a fortnight, and the pilot lost all control over the ship, and let her drive up and down in the Adriatic, wherever she was blown by the storm in which she was caught; and for that very reason she could not get out of the storm, which moves in a

spiral or screw-fashion, so that the unfortunate vessel went North and South, and East and West, boxed the compass, and never got free from the wind whichever way she went, for she went always with the wind. At last she ran on some rocks where two seas met, in a raging, boiling clash of opposite currents, and went at once to pieces. Then we are told, "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship . . . escaped safe to land."

That is exactly what Conversion is, it is an admirable illustration of it. We allow ourselves to be driven about by the storm of passion till at last we come to wreck, and then, when the vessel of Divine grace, built and freighted for us by God, is gone to pieces, we save ourselves on what we can. It is a poor and shabby salvation, but it is better than none at all.

There is no reason why we should make shipwreck of our faith, of our innocence, and throw overboard the stores of supernatural grace given us at our Baptism and Confirmation. There are far more who, after a rough voyage, do reach the Heavenly Port with sound timbers, than some people suppose. The Grace of God is a sustaining power, and it saves far more than you would

think, and though storms may assail, the storms are battled through, and the good boat reaches port battered, it may be, but without having sprung a leak.

There are some people who will persuade you that Conversion is necessary for everyone. That is false and nonsense. It is not necessary for anyone to make wreck of his salvation in order to be washed ashore clinging to a board of it. I believe S. Ambrose was quite right in saying "that it was an easier thing to preserve Baptismal innocence, than to be truly converted after a sinful life."

II. However, when mortal sin has been incurred, then true Conversion and amendment of life are needed. Mark! Conversion and amendment, not one without the other. Conversion without amendment is like a man who has gone the wrong road turning round and sitting down without taking the right road, the night comes upon him, and then he is out in the rain and cold, and darkness, hardly nearer home than if he had continued his journey in the way he was going.

When S. Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, he heard a voice saying, "Saul,

Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he answered, "Who art Thou, Lord?" Then the Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." And he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Observe that he at once submits his will to the will of God. He resolves to follow his own will no more. And further, he offers himself without any reservation. We see in this the transformation of the self-willed Saul into the obedient Paul; but we see also the pattern of a true Conversion. This shews us in what true Conversion consists, in the submission of the will to the will of God, and that complete, without reservation of any sort.

The prophet Jonah was sent to preach the destruction of Nineveh. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown (Jonah iii. 4)." Then the king arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and he caused it to be proclaimed through Nineveh, by the decree of himself and his nobles, "Let men cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and

repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not." And we are told "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not."

This was true Conversion, not the sitting down in sackcloth and ashes only—that indeed was the evidence of true sorrow for transgressions committed, but the thing, we are told, that God looked to, the thing that moved Him to pardon the Ninevites was not their Conversion, but their Amendment. He saw their sackcloth and ashes, their Conversion, and thought nothing of that, but when He saw that every man turned from his evil ways, then He repented of the destruction resolved on, and He did it not.

Now this is exactly the thing that many forget. They suppose that Conversion is everything. Because one day after they had been living careless lives, they had suddenly woke up to a sense of their sin, they suppose that ever after they are secure, they have been converted, and ever after they may cheat and lie, and live impure lives without compunction. They can no more sin, because they have been converted. A work-

ing man said to me one day, "I can trust a man of the world to be as good as his word, but as for one of your converted people, I would not trust him with a shilling, he would be sure to cheat me." That such an impression should get about comes from the fact that Conversion is supposed to dispense with amendment. It does nothing of the sort, it is simply the arousing of the mind to a sense of the danger of the course which has been hitherto pursued, but that is not all. Amendment must follow, or the second state of that man will be worse than the first.

An uncle of mine was walking along a road one very black night, and he had with him a lantern. He thought he was so familiar with his road that he could certainly find it without the use of the light, and the wind was high, so he kept the lantern under his cloak, but a sudden gust raised his coat and blew the flap aside, and the light of the lantern flashed out over the ground, and my uncle saw to his dismay that he had missed his way, and was standing at the very edge of a slate quarry. Another step and he would have been hurled into the depth. Then he carefully groped his way back to the right road, keeping his lantern near the ground,

to make quite sure of his steps, and so got home in safety. Translate this into the spiritual life, and you have a parable of Conversion. You are going on in the dark ; you will not use that light of conscience which God has given you to guide you along the right way ; you cover it over, and obscure the light, and so you go on without it, and go wrong. Then, suddenly, something occurs which makes conscience flash out and shew you that you are on the edge of destruction. You start back in fear. That is Conversion. Then, carefully lighted by conscience, you begin to retrace your way. That is Repentance. Then you get into the right road again, and walk lustily on towards your Heavenly Home. That is Amendment.

III. S. Paul says, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." Yes! it was the Grace of God which roused him. It was the Grace of God which arrested him. But that is not all S. Paul says. He adds, "And His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." That is important. St. Paul's will worked along with God's Grace. God called, and he answered, "Here am I." Christ said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," and he answered, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to

do ?” At once he responded to the call by a free act of his will. Remember that whenever God arouses you from sin or sloth, you must at once act upon the call, you must have a readiness to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So only can Conversion lead to Repentance and Amendment of life. Conversion is a sudden shock. It may paralyse you, or it may stimulate you to a new life, all depends on your will. Rise up at once when God speaks, and say, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” S. Paul had no thought that he was to lie in the road where he had fallen, but he knew that his duty was to be up and about some work for God. So with you. If you have been aroused, then do something for God, and the first thing you can do is to retrace your steps and mend your course.

SERMON VII.

THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND UNDERSTANDING.

(PURIFICATION OF S. MARY).

S. LUKE II. 27.

“He came by the Spirit into the Temple.”

THE Holy Spirit leads very variously. He leads Our Lord into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, He leads Symeon into the Temple to see that Light which is to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Israel. But wherever the Spirit of God may lead, the end of that leading is by the right way into the Land of Righteousness.

The Spirit of Guidance is the Spirit of Counsel, one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Without the guidance of that Spirit, man is sure to go astray. He may have plenty of intelligence, but human intelligence is not sufficient to guide him. He must as well be supernaturally enlightened, for the way he has to go is not the way seen by the eyes of sense, but by the eyes of the understanding, divinely enlightened to see. Take a simple illustration : A man may have the best eyes in the world, but they profit him nothing in a house for finding his way about, unless the window shutters be opened, and the outer light be allowed to pour in and lighten the inside of the house. S. Gregory takes this figure to explain the action of the Divine Spirit of Counsel. He says that just as the whole house is full of darkness, before the admission of outward light, so does every man walk in darkness and in danger of error, unless he walks by the light of the Spirit of Counsel.

I have heard of a blind man on whom an operation was performed, and thereby he obtained his sight. Now this led to a remarkable result. While he was blind, he went about the town without a guide, tapping the way with a stick, and walking across the streets, without fear. But no sooner were his eyes opened than he began to be

afraid. He saw what the dangers were that beset him, the canal along the edge of which he had formerly walked heedlessly, the risks run in crossing streets when there is much traffic, and then he went with far more caution, and often asked for a guide. Now this is not a bad illustration of the different walk of those who go in the blindness of eyes not opened by the Holy Ghost, and those whose eyes are opened and enlightened. The first go anywhere, and have neither scruple nor fear, the second see what are the spiritual dangers that surround them, and are on their guard, and ask for guidance when they are in doubt. He who will be his own guide, who will go his own way, is not he who sees best. Indeed he lets one plainly perceive that he is unable to see those great spiritual perils which surround him.

1. The Spirit of Counsel is that supernatural illumination which enables a man to choose that course which is for his good, and to detect and avoid those dangers which lie in his way. But the Spirit of Counsel is not the Spirit we desire to hear. We have our own wills, and we have cut out our own course for ourselves, and have no desire to be warned from it, and directed into

one that does not commend itself to us.

When Ahab desired to go to Ramoth Gilead in company with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Jehoshaphat advised Ahab first of all to enquire of the Lord whether he ought to go or not, that is, he was to obtain the guidance of the Spirit of Counsel. Then the King of Israel summoned to him four hundred men on whom he could rely, to give him an opinion favourable to his wishes, and they, when consulted, replied, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead to battle, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the King." But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. He said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?" And the King of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man, Michaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord : but I hate him ; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."

We all know the result, the Spirit of Counsel, speaking by the mouth of Michaiah, warned Ahab against the expedition, and assured him that it would lead to his own death, and to the rout of the allied army. Then the King of Israel

was wroth and persisted in his resolution, in spite of the warning, and so was slain and his people scattered.

In like manner, Balaam consulted the Lord before going with Balak, and the Spirit of Counsel forbade him to go. That Spirit shewed him that Israel was the chosen people of God, and that their God would protect them against all their enemies. The Spirit showed him that if he went with the messengers of Balak he would be placed in a false and trying position, his conscience would forbid his cursing the people, and yet his worldly prosperity would depend on his doing so. He would be placed in a position of conflict between interest and duty, a position he might avoid by remaining at home. But Balaam was self-willed, he would not listen to the Spirit, he hoped to find some way of reconciling both interest and duty, so that he might get some honour and riches out of Balak without direct violation of his conscience. And we know the result in this case also. He did effect this compromise. He blessed the people because they must be blessed, but he advised Balak to demoralise them so as to bring down the wrath of God upon them. And the end of Balaam was

that he fell in battle, fighting against the people of God. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," was his pious exclamation, but with that prayer he deceived himself. "O fool!" exclaims an old Father of the Church, "If thou desirest to die the death of the righteous, live the life of one." And the only way in which any man can do that is by listening to the voice of the Spirit, which would lead him to choose the good and avoid the evil.

II. The Spirit which led Symeon this day to the Temple was indeed the Spirit of Counsel, advising him where he must go. But the Spirit that led him to discern in the infant brought that day by the poor mother, the Lord's Christ, Him who was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against, was the Spirit of Understanding.

The Holy Spirit gave to aged Symeon two of His gifts, the Spirit of Counsel, which led him to Christ, and the Spirit of Understanding, which led him to see who Christ was. It is well that you should be made to learn what the difference is between these two gifts of the Spirit. As you are aware, no doubt, the gifts of the Spirit are seven in number : the Spirit of Wisdom, the

Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, the Spirit of Piety, and the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. We are, however, to-day considering only two of these Spirits, the Spirit of Counsel, and the Spirit of Understanding. S. Anthony the Great saw in vision the world strewn with snares and pit-falls, and men falling into them as they walked over it. Now for guidance to see and avoid these snares of the devil, the Spirit of Counsel is necessary. But to see the divine truths hidden from the carnal eye, the Spirit needed is that of Understanding, or Discernment. Thus, when any trouble falls on you, if you can look behind the cloud, and discover why God has sent it you, what purpose He has in afflicting you, whether it be punishment for sin, or separation from the world, or the bringing out of some hidden grace, then your eyes are enlightened by the Spirit of Understanding.

Again, all Grace is, according to the Christian system of Salvation, given Sacramentally. That is,—as in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Divine and the Human, the Spiritual and the Earthly, the Eternal and the short-lived, were united and conciliated in One, so analogously is the Church con-

stituted. The Church herself is Invisible yet Visible, Divine yet Human, Infallible yet Fallible, in Heaven, yet on Earth. There is an invisible, spiritual, mystic bond between the members, and between the members and Christ, and yet there is a visible Church with visible constitution, and mode of admission, and laws and government. She is Divine, with a Divine Head, and a Divine life actuating her, a Divine constitution, and yet she is Human, with men as her rulers, and men and women and children form her members, and are a large club, a voluntary society. She is infallible, because her King is Jesus Christ, Who is the Truth ; the Spirit which gives her life leads into all Truth, her doctrines are revealed by God, she is assured the gift of infallibility ; and yet she is liable in her several members, and even in her various groups of members, to fall into error, never indeed to lose those Truths which are necessary to Salvation, but to err in matters beyond these. She is in Heaven, where sits her King enthroned, and there also are the Angels and the Saints, knit with her in one Communion, and yet she is militant on earth, that is, fighting, here.

Now this, which is hidden from the eyes of

carnal understanding, is made clear to the eyes illumined by the Divine Spirit. The eyes thus enlightened are able to see into this mystery, and behold what is Divine, and Invisible, and Heavenly, while the carnal eyes see only the human, and visible, and earthly.

In the same manner as the Church is constituted, so are the Sacraments, the channels by which Grace is conveyed to each of the members. Everything is according to the pattern of Christ made Flesh. The Sacraments have an outward and visible form, and an inward and spiritual Grace. The carnal eye sees only what is outward in Baptism, namely, a form of admission into the visible Church. Enlightened by the Spirit of Understanding, we see more, we see the bond of Spiritual sonship begun, and the baptized brought into connexion with the foundation of all Spiritual Life, so that thenceforth the supernatural, divine life is begun. To the carnal eye, Holy Communion is a bare reminder of the Death of Christ, that is all. To the spiritually enlightened eye it is more, behind the outward forms of bread and wine is seen Christ Himself fulfilling His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." To the carnal eye, Confirmation is nothing

but the child renewing its baptismal vows ; to the spiritual eye it is more, it is the anointing of the child with the Spirit of Might, to enable it to fight against temptation with hope of victory. To the carnal eye, Marriage is nothing but a contract of partnership publicly vouched for ; to the Spiritual eye it is more, it is the Divine Spirit blessing an union, and sanctifying it with special, extraordinary graces, suitable for the new condition into which the contracting parties enter. To the carnal eye, Holy Orders is nothing but a setting apart of certain men to minister to others in holy things ; to the Spiritual eye it is more, it is the consecration and commissioning by Christ, and the outpouring of the Divine Spirit on those ordained, to enable them to perform their ministry, not by their own strength, but supernaturally assisted. So is it with every office and ordinance in the Church, the invisible and the visible are closely united, and the Spirit of Understanding will alone enable us to see the Divine and Invisible behind and through the veil of the earthly and visible which obscures it.

SERMON VIII.

DANGER IN EVERY STATE.

(ST. MATTHIAS'S DAY.)

ACTS, I., 24-5.

“Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take the post of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”

THE choice of Matthias and the fall of Judas should teach all to fear and to hope; to fear, lest in spite of their privileges and position, they should fall in like manner; to hope, that they, walking worthy of their vocation, may be advanced to higher honour.

“Judas, one of the Twelve,” writes S. Matthew, “went and hanged himself” (Matt. xxvi. 14; xxvii. 5). One of the Twelve Princes of the

Church, to whom was promised to sit on the thrones judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel, falls. Who then among those who will have to come up for judgment will not fear for himself? One of the Twelve Ambassadors of Christ is unfaithful. Who then of those to whom the message is sent will not tremble? One of the Twelve sent out endowed with power of healing, casts himself into eternal death. Who then of those who are sick and need the physician will not be alarmed for his state?

Moses built twelve altars at the foot of Mount Sinai for the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod. xv), in thank-offering to God for the Law given from the Mount. Christ has built us twelve apostles of the faith, memorials of the new Commandment He has taught. "One of the twelve" altars has fallen, and all the ashes that were upon it are poured out. Who will not fear who is dedicated in heart to God?

Twelve precious stones were set in the breastplate of Aaron (Exod. xxxix). Twelve Apostles, elect, precious, are borne by Jesus on His heart. "One of the twelve," snaps and falls from his place like worthless fractured glass. Who will not fear that in the day when God makes up

His jewels, he will be found without value.

God chose twelve princes of the tribes "renowned in the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel" (Numb. i.) to stand with Moses, and lead the people in war. Christ elected twelve Apostles to stand before Him, and to go before, and lead His Church in the great battle it must wage with the world. "One of the twelve" proves a renegade. Who among the thousands that follow will not fear for his own constancy? Solomon set "twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household" (1 Kings, iv). Christ appointed twelve Apostles to feed His household, the Church, with the Holy Sacrament, and with the Word of life, and "one of the twelve" is false to his commission, betrays his trust. Who will not fear lest he fail for hunger? Twelve glorious stars shone about the head of the woman clothed with the sun, seen by the Evangelist John (Rev. xii). Twelve Apostles are set as brilliant stars shining about the head of the Church, illuminating the world with their example. "One of the twelve" is extinguished, and to it is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Who among the fainter lights in the

firmament of the Church will not fear, lest his feeble twinkle expire? On twelve foundation-stones are erected the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem. On twelve apostles did Christ build His Church, against which the gates of Hell were not to prevail. "One of the twelve" is faulty and falls out of place. Who will not fear for the wall that rests thereupon, lest he also be built on an imperfect foundation and drop from his place?

I. No place is secure from fall, no condition is safe. "There is security," wrote S. Bernard, "neither in Heaven, nor in Paradise, much less in the world. From Heaven fell the angel, though he stood in the presence of Divinity; from Paradise fell Adam, though in the place of all pleasures; in the world fell Judas, though in the school of the Saviour." Yes! Judas is gone, gone to his own place, and there is a gap in the sacred College.

"He shall fill the places with dead bodies" said David under the old dispensation which led to death, but under the new dispensation which leadeth to life, "He shall fill the places of the dead with the living!" Lucifer fell from Heaven with a train of apostate angels. "He shall fill

the places." The kingdom is now open to all believers, and the vacancies the fallen angels made are filled by the saints of God. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, the Lord of Hosts will enter at the head of the redeemed, who will fill up the empty thrones. The fall of one is the the rising of another. The earth was filled with violence, all flesh had sinned. The flood came and drowned the world. "He shall fill the places." Noah and his sons re-peopled the void earth. Empires and kingdoms have flourished and fallen, "He shall fill the places," others arise and occupy their room. Assyria has gone, and Greece rises, Greece decays and Rome succeeds. Rome is gone among the dead, and nations whom it hardly knew rise out of the ruins. The Synagogue renounces its birth-right, and the Church "fills the places." Those to whom the Gospel is preached will not come to the feast. One has his farm, another his merchandise, and a third has married a wife. "He shall fill the places." "Go forth into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Salvation is offered to you, the places of fallen angels, the places of renegade saints,—will you have them? You have the offer, you

must make the election speedily. If you refuse, "He will fill the places" with others, and your chance will have gone from you for ever.

Seeing this, my brethren, remember the advice given by Christ to the Bishop of Philadelphia, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. iii. 2). Divine Providence has placed each man in a position where he may be saved, only let him hold fast that which he has, the Faith given to him, the Sacramental Grace accorded him, the hope set before him, lest by negligence he let them slip, and his place and crown become void, and another man take both; for God will not suffer them to remain untenanted, "He will fill the places."

II. When S. Jerome was in the Holy Land, visiting Jerusalem, and staying at Bethlehem, S. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, wrote to him a letter of congratulation, in which he expressed his belief that the mere fact of living in the Holy Places must conduce to Salvation. S. Jerome wrote back to the young bishop, "Paulinus, the thing is, not to have been at Jerusalem, but to have lived well at Jerusalem. Men will be weighed, not by the place where they have lived, nor by the position which they have occupied, but by their faith and works

There leads a road to Heaven from Britain as well as from Jerusalem." I may add to this, and expand the wise teaching of S. Jerome. I may say, "There leads a road not only from Britain, but there leads one from every prince's palace, and nobleman's seat, from every squire's mansion, and priest's parsonage, from every farm-house, and every grocer's and linen-draper's, and bookseller's and stationer's shop, and from every workman's cottage,—there leads a road out of every parlour by the front door, and out of every kitchen by the back door, and they all go the same way, and run right up, up to the gate of heaven, and every man and woman, in whatever position they are, may walk along that road and get to heaven. But then, I may say something more. These roads have got very slight fences on either side, and some have none, and it is quite possible to fall over the edge, and then there is a very long fall into the abyss of outer darkness that gapes below. People used to think, in olden times, that after the soul left the body, it passed over "the Brig of Dread, no bigger than a thread,"—a very narrow thread-like bridge, and on either side were flames and swords, and if the poor soul became giddy, it fell over and was lost, pierced by the

blades or burnt up by the flames, but that if it reached the end of the bridge it was safe for ever. The Brig of Dread is not after life, it is during life, and that road I have been speaking of leads over it up to Heaven. It was off that Brig that Judas fell, it was firmly over that Brig that Matthias walked.

Every man may be saved in whatever state he is, but also every man may be lost. A prince may be saved by fulfilling the duties of his position, and may be lost by neglecting them. A magistrate may be saved by dispensing justice, and lost by unjust judgments. A priest may be saved by preaching the truth and feeding his flock, and may be lost by preaching falsehood and deserting his sheep. A labourer may be saved by honourably fulfilling the task for which he is hired, and may be lost by defrauding his master. David was saved, and Saul lost, and both were kings. Daniel was chosen, and Balaam rejected, and both were prophets. Matthias is in Paradise, and Annas and Caiaphas in hell, and these were priests. Peter is blessed, and Ananias cursed, and both were married men. Deborah is exalted to heaven, and Jezebel cast out to be the meat of dogs, and both were widows. Abel is in

Paradise, and Cain bears the brand for ever on his brow, and both were shepherds. All conditions furnish Heaven with saints, and Hell with outcasts. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matt. iii. 10). Every tree, observe, of whatever sort, apple or pear, or fig or cherry, or only the elder with its black berries, and the thorn with its scarlet hips. So it is with man, every man, whether rich or poor, whether master or servant, whether old or young, unless he brings forth his proper fruit, is cut down and cast away. The fig is not required from the thorn, nor the grape from the bramble, but each must bring forth that fruit which belongs to, and is suitable to, his calling and his position. God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, upon the earth" (Gen. i. 11). It is the same in His Church, He expects each man to bring forth fruit "after his kind" and no other. He does not expect the fruit of one which belongs to the stock of another. You will be very likely to bring no fruit to perfection if you try to do that which does not belong to your calling. The priest preaches, and the ploughman ploughs, but if the ploughman

begins to teach he will make as great a blunder of his teaching as the priest would of the furrow if he attempted to plough. And the same with other callings.

“Study to be quiet, and to do your own business” says S. Paul. And what will the result be? “Ye shall increase more and more” (1 Thess. iv. 10, 11). It is those who mind the affairs of others who are discontented with their own calling, who think they could profit more were they in any other situation, and therefore neglect the duties of their own, who bring no fruit to perfection. It is those who look steadily at the duties of their calling and neither looking to one side nor the other, labour therein to perfect themselves, who “increase more and more.”

The prophet Habakkuk says, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved” (ii. 1). That is an admirable resolution, which it will do well for all to adopt. Stand upon the watch, each on your own tower, each where you have been set. Do not think you can see better on any other tower, the Great Captain has set you where you are, and what he says unto you is, Watch

where I have planted you. What for? Watch and see what He will say to you there, when He makes the round of the walls, and looks to see how His watchmen are keeping guard, and be ready, if He wills it, to move elsewhere, but not unless He wills it; and again, watch what answer you will give when you are reprov'd; how you will amend your errors, how you will excuse negligence and correct it.

SERMON IX.

CO-OPERATION WITH GRACE.

(THE ANNUNCIATION.)

S. LUKE I. 38.

“Be it unto me according to thy word.”

IN the beginning, when God would create the world He said “Let there be,” and what He willed was immediately. “Let there be light,” and at once light sprang into being. “Let the dry land appear,” and the waters rolled back. “Let there be sun, and moon, and stars,” and the heavens were filled with brightly shining bodies. But now that He is about to renew the face of His earth, fallen from the glory which it had when it was very good, He does not act in the same commanding manner. Man has fallen, man the crown of

creatures, and all creatures have suffered with him. Man must be restored before creation can recover its original beauty and perfection ; and the restoration of man can only be effected through the Incarnation of the Son of God. To bring about this glorious consummation, God sends His Son to be born of a pure Virgin, that He may teach men the way of God truly, set them an example by which they may walk, make atonement for their transgressions, and communicate to them supernatural power whereby they may be enabled to overcome that evil which has been introduced into their nature by the fall of their first parents.

But before the Incarnation takes place, God sends the Angel Gabriel to Mary, and announces to her what He designs. She is to become the Mother of the Most High, and to remain a Virgin. She is to receive a privilege higher than that ever to be accorded to another mortal, to be exalted to a height attainable by no other. But there is no compulsion. The Angel is sent to ascertain whether she will consent. The Annunciation is made, because it depends on Mary's will, whether the Son of God is to be born of her or not. Was there another equal in holiness and purity to

Mary who might have taken her place, had she declined the honour? We may well doubt it. If not—the whole scheme of Man's Restoration depended on her will for execution at that time. Her "Be it unto me according to thy word," determined the Incarnation then, and the birth at Bethlehem, where it took place. Wonderful as it may seem, yet it is true, God waited on the will of Mary. The free consent of her will was necessary that He might carry out His plan, that His promise made to our first parents might be fulfilled, at least at that particular time.

The immense power for good or evil that resides in the free-will of man, and the absolute necessity of its consenting to allow God to work out salvation, is the great lesson that this festival teaches us. It is the Great Feast of the Free Will. God had predestined Mary, before the foundations of the world were laid, to be the Mother of Incarnate God. Whether there had been a Fall or not, the Son of God, we may well believe, would have assumed our flesh, and been born to be the King of Mankind, the Head of Creation. God had sanctified Mary from her mother's womb in a manner far higher than He had sanctified John the Baptist, and yet He could not effect

His purpose, the Holy Ghost could not descend and overshadow her, till her free will had given formal consent. The Shekinah, the Glory cloud, had descended on the Tabernacle whenever God willed to speak with His people, but on this tabernacle of Mary, the Shekinah could not descend till she said, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

The human will, so feeble, so capricious, so flexible, can resist the Divine will, can turn its purposes aside. The Divine will is actually paralysed for good by the opposition of the will of man.

How wonderful this is ! And yet it could not be otherwise from the moment that God endowed man with Free Will.

1. The Angel Gabriel, in some representations of the Annunciation, is shown as kneeling to the Blessed Virgin, and the attitude is not unfitting, the Angel is thus shown entreating Mary to consent to what God has at His heart, and without which there can be no exultation in Heaven, no Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

But, indeed, it is not the angel only who is in the attitude of entreaty, it is God Himself Who is bound not to act except with the consent of the

free will of His creatures. If Mary prays of Him His grace, He prays of her to give her consent to become the Mother of Incarnate God.

The more you consider this, the more wonderful seems the power of the free will. Had there been no free will, there would have been no angel sent to Mary, God would have been made manifest in the flesh, born of her without her being consulted, and her consent asked.

Now the whole scheme of man's salvation is on similar lines. God saves no one against his consent. God communicates no grace without the will to receive it. God enters into no communion without a readiness to converse with Him.

A man may be surrounded by blessings, may float in a sea of grace, and yet, without a ready will to accept, he cannot take in and assimilate the grace and blessings offered him. A man may fall into temptation through weakness, but without a deliberate act of will, of deliberate hostility to God, he cannot be utterly cast away. A man, moreover, cannot attain to that measure of perfection set before him, that is to the perfect ideal which God predestined for him to grow into,—and there is such an ideal before each—without a deliberate act of the will consenting to strive to

reach it. Men are not moral jelly-fish, to be washed this way and that, according as the tide sets, or the current runs, or the wind blows, they are animals with a backbone, able to go where their wills send them, against current, and wind, and tide if they will.

I know that there are people with extraordinarily feeble wills, and these soft and yielding characters are always getting into trouble, as they are washed by the current, and getting out again as they are washed back by the recoil wave. They are very imperfect human beings, with a great deal of body and very little soul, much flesh and little mind, much good intention and better will,—but they are like those stars which are called “nebulous,” that is, “cloudy,” because they are only a sort of shiny haze or mist, and not sparks of clear light. Their poor, faint, loose-textured will must condense into a little spark of resolution, or they cannot be hung as stars in God’s firmament for ever. It is said that most stars were nebulous once, but they have settled into shape, and so must it be with the will, it must become fixed for good or ill some time, and resolve to accept God’s salvation or to reject it, and so determine their everlasting state.

II. What is God's scheme of salvation? It is the Sacramental system. We are saved by Grace, grace given to us through visible channels. That is God's plan, we may not like it, then we must leave it, and follow our own plans, or the plans of Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley, or any Jack or Tom we set up as our guide. But God's plan is the Church plan, that is, the Sacramental system, which is in accordance with the plan of the Incarnation, the Invisible bound up with the Visible, Grace given through natural channels, Force acting through Matter.

Beside this, there is something more, but of which I am not going to speak now, as I have spoken about it often enough at other times. God deals with souls in other ways, He afflicts, He scourges, He encourages, and these are all inducements or warnings to the soul to submit freely to His will.

What I am going to speak of now is God's plan for our salvation, and that is the Sacramental plan. He has conceived and carried out the idea of giving man divine power to enable him to cast out and utterly overcome that 'body of death,' the old corruption which exists in his nature, because he has inherited a fallen nature; and also, so to strengthen and renovate the body

that it shall be able to stand before God in the kingdom of the Resurrection as perfect and beautiful as was Adam in Paradise, before he ate of the forbidden tree. You see what is aimed at, the undoing of the Fall by strengthening man's spiritual nature, by raising his moral nature, and by regenerating his bodily nature. The spiritual nature became subordinate to the animal nature by the Fall, the moral nature became gradually corrupt and gross, and the bodily nature became subject to death. All this is undone by the Sacramental system. By that God communicates to the soul spiritual strength to rise to its command again, elevates the moral nature, and infuses into the bodily nature the element of restoration. Thus He designs to undo all that was done by the Fall, and to restore man to the perfection in which he was made.

But, just as God left it to the free consent of Mary to accept or reject the offer made her, so does He leave it free to you to accept or reject the offer He makes to you. You may receive the Sacraments without doing your part, by joining your own free will with the Grace then offered, and then they are of no use to you. Sacraments will save no man without the proper disposition on his

part, and the proper disposition is a will to profit by the grace offered, and to live to the model of perfection held up before him, to attain which grace is offered. When I speak of this model, I mean that high type of moral and spiritual excellence which, we feel in our hearts, is what we ought to reach, and in which we know we could alone rest satisfied. This model is the predestined perfection set before each individual man, it is different for each, higher in some than in others, but such as it is, it is that which God desires us to strive to attain to, and it is that, which, assisted by His grace, we can arrive at.

I have said that the restoration of man consists not only of the bringing back of the spiritual and moral man to his fit level, but also of the regeneration of his bodily nature. This is effected by the Holy Eucharist. In that we receive the Risen and Spiritual Body of Christ, the same body that was born of Mary, rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven, but spiritualised, that is, it has passed into a new sphere of existence, and into new relations to space and time. By means of His glorified Body, Christ infuses into our physical bodies the power of resurrection and glorification. It is a leaven of

Eternal Life, undoing and casting out the ferment of sin introduced by Adam.

If we do not receive the Holy Communion, then we cannot expect a resurrection to Eternal Life, unless God should see fit to act outside of His ordinance, in some way of which we know nothing, and on which we have no right to reckon.

You know how the caterpillar and the butterfly are taken commonly as types of the change that will take place in us. Let me draw your attention to one particular in this type, not generally observed. If a caterpillar does not obtain the food proper for its nourishment, it will live on for a while, and perhaps eat other food, and then make its chrysalis or sheath. Out of that chrysalis, however, it will never hatch, its strength is exhausted in making the case, and it has not the power to break through it, and undergo the mighty change. So is it with us. If we do not eat of the Divinely appointed Food, provided for us in the Holy Eucharist, although we may live on and subsist on other food, we shall not have taken into our systems that supply of spiritual force which will enable us to burst forth from our graves at the trump of the Great Angel, glorious, incorrupt, powerful, and free.

SERMON X.

THE ATTAINMENT OF PERFECTION.

(ST. MARK'S DAY.)

S. JOHN XV. 2.

“Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

THE will of God is our sanctification, that each should strive after perfection. “Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” says S. Paul in the Epistle for this day; and in the Gospel, Christ represents the Father as a husbandman, who so cares for his vines that he prunes them in order that they may bring forth good grapes. “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.”

If a vine be allowed to grow unpruned, it rambles over anything it can lay hold of with its tendrils, it throws out long branches, and produces an abundance of leaves, and also a great show of grapes, but these are small, many drop off, and few come to perfection.

What is generally done in a vineyard is to cut off all the branches except the three that appear most vigorous, and then, when the vine is in flower, either to nip off a certain number of flowers, or afterwards to reduce the number of bunches, that what remain may grow full and rich. This is the way that God deals with us, He cuts away or nips off a great deal of that which seems to us to be promising; but the object is our perfection, and not our running to waste in a number of indifferent pursuits, or the production of a good deal of indifferent fruit. In a word, He desires the concentration of our efforts. A great deal of the pruning we get is for the purpose of driving us to concentrate our efforts for good in one or two directions. He would rather have of us a couple of good heavy bunches, than fifty little shrivelled and sour bunches.

I. I would have you then, whenever you lose

something or someone which you have greatly valued, and upon whom or which much of the sap of your love and interest has flowed, to direct that sap towards what remains. In the same way, we may have a good number of pursuits, and take an interest in a good number of different objects, when somehow or other the opportunity of following these pursuits, of cultivating certain tastes, is taken from us. Then pluck up a good heart, and instead of lamenting over your loss, set to work on some others which have been neglected, and try to become proficient in them. Or again, you have hitherto had the opportunity of doing good in several directions, and you have done what you could, not very perfectly, and one sort of good has suffered for the attention given to the other. Your efforts have been spread over too wide a surface. By some means, your opportunities are reduced. Do not grumble and find fault with the means by which this change has been wrought, and raise a great outcry. Set to work more vigorously on what remains, and try to do that more systematically and thoroughly. A little good done well is worth much good attempted.

You will find, through life, that there is a

constant hacking away, or picking off of occasions of profit, of flowers giving promise. Be content, you have not moral or spiritual sap enough for making all grow, be content to develop to the utmost those which remain.

II. I have another lesson to give you. Look to yourselves and not to others. Be not always peeping under your companion's leaves, and examining their grapes, but look to your own. That is easier said than done. We know we have some blighted grapes, so we search our neighbours and make an outcry. See! see! what grapes are these! Mildewed, rotten, devoured by spiders and worms! I say, look to your own, and not to the fruit of others. That is the only way in which you can advance to perfection.

One evening an eminent sculptor paid Michael Angelo a visit; and asked to be allowed to go through his studio and gallery of sculpture. The great artist was very reluctant to allow this at that time, because it was night. He would have to show his statues by the light of a candle, and he believed justice could only be done them by day-light. But that was not his chief reason. In his studio was a figure he was heartily

ashamed of. He had somehow carved it in so distorted a form, that its limbs were out of all proportion to the trunk, and he did not wish a sculptor who was a judge of works of art to see this disgraceful botch. However, the visitor was a man whom he could not well refuse. So he took a candle and led the way, first of all into his gallery, where were his perfect works. He showed his visitor this and that, dilated on the merits, the skill which he had shown in arranging the attitudes, the ease of some of the postures, the delicacy of the moulding, and so they went on till he came to the studio, and there he began at the unfinished works at the side furthest from the miserable botch. Presently he came to that, and then "Oh! what a misfortune!" he cried, and dropped the candle on the floor, where it went out. "Never mind, you have seen all I have to show you. I will lead you out in the dark." This showed Michael Angelo to be as skilful in concealing his blots as in showing off his beauties. Is not that just as we are? we are always ready to make display of what good things we possess, to boast of our means, our family, our distinguished acquaintances, to show our skill and accomplishments, to let our good deeds,

our charity, our piety be seen and known, but when it comes to the defects, out with the candle.

But this is what our conduct should be when we have to do with our neighbours and friends and acquaintances. How often we talk them over with some confidential companion. We speak of the good qualities, the honour, uprightness, integrity of some man, and then a word slips in with a—*but*:—and then follows something disparaging, some skeleton is suspected to lurk in his cupboard, some blemish is seen to deface his character—ah! would that at the first *but*—out went the candle!

I am not sure that with a good many the candle is not taken to hunt out all the hideousnesses, the deformities, the faults that can be found in the lives and conduct and characters of those they know. The old cynic took a lantern and went about Athens looking for an honest man, but these take the light to pry into all the evil they can find, and when they come to any good quality that they ought to praise, and copy, then, out goes the candle.

If we are to seek our own perfection, we shall never attain it if we are always looking at our

neighbours, seeking out their faults, and not examining our own selves. This self-examination is a painful and yet a necessary duty, it is humiliating and yet it exalts, it lowers ourselves in our own eyes and yet it stimulates us to remedy what is defective, cut away what is bad, and brace up what is weak. It is quite impossible to make any advance in the spiritual life without this examination of self, the attainment of perfection is altogether impossible without a thorough knowledge of our own defects.

III. This leads to something further :—to discontent with our backward state, and eagerness to press forward. When we know our own defects we become impatient with ourselves; and then we are likely to improve.

An artist who sees perfection in his pictures will never make a great painter. If he be dissatisfied because what he has achieved falls far short of what he has imagined, then he will work hard to acquire more skill ; but if he be satisfied with his picture, he will never get any further in his art. A very good rule with a picture is to hold it up before a looking-glass, and then it is seen reversed ; at once all its imperfections, the false drawing, the clumsy arrangement of figures,

the incorrect light and shade become manifest. I have seen an artist who was flushed with delight over his picture thus hold it before a mirror, and when he saw the reflexion, grow pale with disgust. Such a mirror we have in God's word. We look at ourselves, and "measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves," (2 Cor. x. 12.) boast beyond our measure, but when we begin to look into the perfect law of God, and see what is really required of us, how high the standard is that is set before us, what the "rule is which God hath distributed unto us," then we are filled with shame, and begin with confusion of face to undo much that we have done, and paint much that we had neglected to touch.

This is what S. Paul expresses when he says, "I am not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I might apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 12—19.) There is another very striking

passage, and that of David, which I will quote to you. "As for me," he says, "I will behold Thy presence in righteousness : and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." (Ps. xvii. 16.) He seems to be looking before him at the Divine Presence in its perfection of holiness and righteousness, and then he looks down at himself, and he says to himself, "What a miserable copy ! I was made in the image and likeness of God, but see how defaced I am by sin. I try all I can to bring out the resemblances to the Divine image, and to blot out the smears that disfigure it. I try to reproduce the lines of the Form before me in my own life, but I fail miserably. I am full of disappointment and disgust with myself ; however, I will go on trying, I will not abandon my task, and after having worked hard at it all my days, I will lay me down to sleep, and when I wake up, lo ! an invisible hand has completed the work I so imperfectly executed. I wake up, and I find the blemishes all cancelled, and the perfection I aimed at attained, Thy likeness is complete in me, and then, but not till then am I satisfied with it."

SERMON XI.

PRAYER, THE WEAPON OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

(SS. PHILIP AND JAMES.)

S. JOHN XIV. 13.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that he Father may be glorified in the Son.”

SINCE the life of man is a warfare, each man must fight. But where are the weapons of his warfare? A soldier without weapons is a body without limbs, a writer without a pen, a fortress without walls. To be without weapons is to be the prey of the enemy.

With a javelin Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, thrust through the impious Zimri; with an ox-goad Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines, and delivered Israel; with a sword Gideon destroyed

the camp of Midian ; with a jaw-bone of an ass Samson slew his thousands ; with a tent-nail Jael smote Sisera through the temples ; with his bow and arrow Jonathan took the stronghold of the Philistines.

“ But,” says S. Paul, “ the weapons of our warfare are not carnal ” (2 Cor. x. 4). “ We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ” (Eph. vi. 12).

What then are our weapons ? I answer, in the first place, Prayer.

“ That word, ‘ *I pray*, ’ is a disagreeable and burdensome word,” said the old heathen orator, Cicero ; but the Christian finds it neither, and he finds it a weapon of marvellous sharpness, and of wondrous efficacy.

When the patriarch Jacob was dying, he said, in blessing to his son Joseph, “ I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow ” (Gen. xlviii. 22).

There is no mention in Genesis, or any other place, of a war against the Amorites in which Jacob was engaged, and we can hardly imagine

him fighting the whole nation of the Amorites, and wresting from them a tract, and that a very considerable one, of land. Now, when we look at the Chaldee text, we find this to be the blessing: "I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which my prayer obtained for me out of the hand of the Amorite."

It was the prayer of Jacob that was the weapon with which, in a way we know not, he obtained a tract of land that had previously been in the possession of the Amorites. And prayer will be the sword and bow with which we must fight our spiritual foe, and wrest from him those regions which are now in darkness, to bring them to the light, and also that lot and share in us which he has obtained through the transgression of our father, Adam.

I. The greatest promises are made to prayer. It is represented as the most powerful of spiritual forces. It is of unlimited efficacy. "Before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isai. lxxv. 24). "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke xi. 9). "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified



in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John xiv. 13, 14). "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 24). "If ye abide in me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 23, 24).

Then hear how confidently S. John writes from his own experience, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John v. 14, 15).

I think you will agree with me that it would have been impossible for God to have promised more to prayer. See how liberal He is, He scarce makes any reservations, He throws down His promise and says: Try it! put it to the test

of experience, and see if My word be not true. I say, Ask and ye shall receive, ask then what ye will,—only according to My will and your good—and it shall be done.

There is a proviso. What is asked must be according to His will, and for our good. I do not say that He will not sometimes answer a prayer even when it is against His will and not for our good, if we persist in it after He has shown that it displeases Him. There are, and have been, such cases, and afterwards when the prayer has been answered, then in bitter sorrow and shame, the person who has received what he has asked for, acknowledges that he has acted wrongly in not submitting himself to the will of God. But generally, when a thing is asked for which is not for our good and against God's will, we may be disappointed at the time that the prayer is unanswered, but afterwards the light comes on the soul, and the way and wisdom of God is seen, and the soul can only thank God with fervour that the prayer was not heard, or rather that the answer was denied.

But if the prayer be according to God's will, and be persevered in, and asked with faith, granted it will be. Whenever anything connected

with this world is desired, then it is always well to ask for it conditionally, that is, to ask for it, adding "if it be Thy will." In the agony in the garden Christ prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

II. One reason, and that the principal one why prayer is so inefficacious, is that it is not earnest and persevering. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," said our Lord (Luke xviii. 1). That is, they ought not to give up prayer because they do not receive an answer at once. In the parable which our Lord spoke to illustrate His teaching, the widow who prays meets with a repulse and inattention, but yet in the end obtains her petition. Now, many a Christian takes up and throws down prayer after a brief trial and disappointment, much as the recruit who fires off a gun for the first time, when he is struck by the recoil, casts the weapon aside, and says "I have had enough of that." Prayer is not to be taken up and thrown aside, it is the earnest persevering prayer which obtains what is asked for. The prayer taken up and thrown aside is prayer without faith, and to that no promise is attached.

When David went against Goliath, Saul offered him his armour, but when the stripling had put the helmet on his head and the breastplate over his heart, and the greaves on his legs, and took the sword in his hand, he essayed to go and could not. Then he said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them."

Very much in the same way do men put on prayer when any emergency arises. They have never been accustomed to pray, and when the need for prayer arises, they try to pray, and—they cannot. "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them."

The six days of the week are spent in cursing and swearing and idle talk, and then the fancy comes to go to church on the Sunday and join in the prayers ; but it is in vain, the prayer will not fit the mouth, and the spirit of the petition will not agree with the spirit within. "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." And exactly the same is it at the end of life, when that life has not been one of communing with God, the mind cannot speak to God, it cannot fix itself on God, it strays here and there, the soul finds no satisfaction in prayer, the petitions will not rise, they trail along the

ground like steam on a rainy day. At last the man who all his life-time has lived without prayer casts his prayers aside. "I cannot go into the presence of God with these, for I have not proved them."

How is it possible to pray effectively if to pray at all be a novelty? How can the heart attach itself to God, when it has been trailing after other things and clinging to them? How can the mind rise to God, when the mind has never been in the habit of looking up to Him?

The mill that has been grinding cement all the week will not grind corn properly till it has been cleaned; the man who has been beer-drinking and swearing all his life will not, at the end, be able to raise his soul to God in acceptable prayer; and the man who all the week thinks of nothing but his business will not think much of God on the Sunday.

In prayer, as in everything else, practice makes perfect; it is use that makes the workman. The habit of prayer must be acquired, or prayer cannot be effectual; and prayer is the great occupation of Christians. S. Paul says that "the Lord is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord

shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 12—15). The words are remarkable. S. Paul says: The Apostles and their successors are sent to preach to those who know not God, in order that they may hear the wonderful truths of the Gospel, and they hear these in order that they may believe, and they believe in order that they may pray. That is the end of all; all teaching, all preaching is to that end—to bring men to pray, and if it does not produce this it is worthless. The Lord is rich unto those that call upon Him, but the riches of His goodness will not be known by those who do not pray.

To my mind there is nothing so saddening as the prayerlessness of the English people, as compared with so many foreign people. I have been into churches abroad, little village churches, at all times of the day, and rarely have found one without someone praying in it. Often a child, or one or two children, quite by themselves, no one has sent them there, their own hearts have

drawn them, and there they will kneel for an hour in prayer. What English child would do that? Where will you see any English man or woman do that in a country village church? No. The riches of God's goodness are not tasted by our people, they are reserved for poor little barefooted peasant girls and old men in rags, and labourers who come into church in the intervals of work, in foreign lands. These know what prayer is, these taste the riches of the goodness of the Lord, but ours not, and ours never will do so till they learn to pray, and not to pray occasionally, but to make a habit of it. Then, and not till then, will they learn that God is no liar, that He keeps His promise, and that if they will ask anything in the name of Christ, He will give it.

S. James, whom we commemorate this day, was so in the habit of prayer, says the first Historian of the Church, that his knees had become hard, like those of the camel. Our good English Christians sit down to pray—at least in public prayer—and in private are down—if they pray at all—for five minutes, and think that an hour. No horny knees among them. Listen to what this same S. James says in his Epistle,

“If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” That is decided, is it not? Do you suppose S. James would have had those horny knees if he had not found out by experience that the Lord was as good as His word?

SERMON XII.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

S. BARNABAS' DAY.

ACTS IV. 36.

“Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, The Son of Consolation.”

It is recorded of S. Barnabas that he was a Levite of Cyprus, and that having land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. This was in the first flush and enthusiasm of the founding of the Church. Then, we are told, “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common.—Neither was there any among them that lacked;

for as many as were possessed of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

This primitive communism cannot have lasted long, or existed outside of the Church in Jerusalem, for when next we hear of Barnabas, he is at Antioch, and is there engaged in making a collection to relieve the distressed Church at Jerusalem, and to this collection the believers at Antioch contributed each according to his ability, so that there, at all events, they had not sold their lands and distributed the money, nor had all things in common. On the contrary, they kept their property, and when they heard that the Church at Jerusalem was in distress, the wealthy gave largely, and the poor gave of their little, to relieve the sufferers. No such communism existed in the Churches founded by S. Paul. If it had, many of his exhortations to liberal almsgiving would have been out of place. "He that soweth little shall reap little; and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God

loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix., 6, 7.) And he wrote to S. Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life." (1 Tim. vi., 17-19).

I do not think that the practice of the Church at Jerusalem was intended to be imitated by the Church elsewhere. That practice was no essential part of Christianity. If Christ had intended that all wealth should be in common, He would not, in His Sermon on the Mount, have given instructions as to the manner in which alms are to be distributed. A Church where all is in common, and the rich have given up their wealth into a common fund, out of which all are supplied as every man has need, is not a Church in which almsgiving can be exercised.

I believe, rather, that the community of goods of the primitive Church at Jerusalem is shown us not as an example to be imitated, but as a figure of what the whole Catholic Church really is, as a figure of her spiritual constitution. That little Church, with the Apostles at the head of it, in which all who were rich gave what they had, and

the poor, of their poverty, gave what they had, and out of the common fund all were maintained, is a type of the spiritual Church then and now, there and everywhere. Whatever is done in the Church is not done for self, but for the universal Church, no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. When one man labours at his own perfection, he is not working for himself, but for the general good, when one leads a holy life, he not only saves his own soul, but his example profits many. When one prays, he does not pray for self, but for many. When one suffers patiently, the merit of his patient endurance abounds to make many rich. "I mean not" says S. Paul, "that other men be eased, and ye burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality." (2 Cor. viii., 13,14). S. Paul in this place is speaking indeed of contributions of money to be made in the Corinthian Church for them who needed in another Church, that at Jerusalem. Indeed this Jewish communistic community seems always to have been in difficulties, and obliged to beg from those Churches which had not rushed



into this extravagant and impracticable course. However, let that be as it may, S. Paul exhorts his Corinthians to contribute of their money to the needy Jewish Christians, and he promised, if they did so, that the abundance of piety, and purity, and rich graces, which adorned the Jewish community, should overflow its bounds and return to the Corinthian Church, which, if rich in this world's goods, was composed of a very ill-conditioned, disorderly, immoral set of Christians. The Corinthian would give his gold, and the Jew his prayer, and the abundant treasure of grace in heaven would open, and Christ from it would bestow on the Corinthian that grace and sanctity which he lacked, in exchange for the alms which he supplied to the Jew, deficient in this world's goods.

Our Lord bids us lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven and not on earth. He bids us make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations; but it would seem as though the treasure were not merely personal, but that the good went into one general store, from which Christ distributes to every man severally as he needs, so that the abundance of some may be a

supply for your want, and your abundance a supply for them, that there may be equality.

Our Lord sat over against the treasury in the temple, and marked how rich men of their abundance cast in, and also the poor of their penury. That treasury was opened, and the hand of the high priest was thrust in, and from it was drawn the money that was to buy the blood of Christ from Judas Iscariot. It was not the money of this one, or of that one, but was something of the general sum to which so many had contributed, which went to buy Christ, which went to pay for the redemption of the world.

Ever since then, there has been a treasury in Christ's temple, and into it all His members have been casting in, some of their abundance, and some of their penury. Whenever a devout prayer is offered, a coin is cast in ; whenever an act of self-sacrifice is made, a coin is cast in ; whenever a temptation is resisted, a coin is cast in ; whenever devout homage is offered to Incarnate Christ, present in His Church, a coin is cast in ; whenever a work of mercy is performed, a coin is cast in. The Apostles cast in their labours, their sufferings, their zeal, their martyrdoms. The Evangelists cast in their work of writing the

Gospel narratives of the life of Christ. The great Teachers of the Church cast in their learning. The Virgins their purity. The Confessors their good confessions, and the Martyrs their anguish and blood.

When the Lord commanded the building of the tabernacle, He said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering." (Exod. xxv., 2). "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . and they came both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted. . . and they brought unto Him free-will offerings every morning." (Exod. xxxv., 21, xxxvi., 3). Moses gives long lists of what were brought, gold, silver, brass, precious stones, blue, purple, and scarlet wool, and white linen, skins of rams and badgers, pieces of shittim wood, spice and oil, whoever had anything to give, gave freely, and all went to build and adorn the tabernacle of the entire congregation, the tabernacle which was not the tabernacle of Moses, or the tabernacle of

Aaron, or the tabernacle of any one tribe, or prince of a tribe, not even the tabernacle of Levi, but the tabernacle of the Congregation. When once the offering was made, it ceased to belong to the single giver, it went into the common fund, and out of that the tabernacle was made for all the people.

So is it in the Church, each contributes something, each gives what he can, one gives alms, one teaches, one prays, one wrestles against a terrible temptation, one lies in bed a martyr to cruel sufferings, and bears patiently, one is much under provocation, one is humble in his own eyes, one has a zeal which consumes his heart, one ministers to the sick, one clothes the naked, one visits the prisoners ; but all these contribute to the general good, to the edifying of the Body of Christ, the building up of His Catholic Church. The personal work is not personal when done in Christ, all its selfishness is effaced, it is for all, not for one, all aims meet in Christ, all merit is His, all graces are in His charge, and when any lacks, He puts in His hand and He draws forth and distributes to each man severally, as he needs, and as He wills.

When Our Lord was on earth with His Apostles,

they had but one purse in common, and that was borne by Judas. Into that purse each cast what he had, Christ put in that which He possessed, Peter the profits of his fishing, Levi the salary from his custom-house office, all put in what they had, the rich of their abundance, and the poor of their penury, and none said that any of that which was in there was his own, except Judas. He filched some for his own personal requirements, without it doing him any good. When one lacked shoes, the hand was put into the bag and money was drawn out, and Peter did not say, That is mine, and therefore should not be spent for Andrew ; and when one was hungry, the hand was put in and a penny drawn forth, to buy him bread, and the others were not jealous and grudging of the penny because it was not his, but theirs. No, as each had necessity, so was he supplied, and the only one who sought to reap a special, selfish advantage was Judas.

Somewhat thus is it in the school of Christ now ; there is a common treasury of Grace filled by the merits of Christ Himself, but also with what is cast in by those who are His disciples, each contributing something. When any man lacks he asks of God, Who giveth liberally, and

upbraideth not, and receives out of the common store.

II. Now, my brethren, what a comforting doctrine is this! How it shows us the reality there is in the Communion of Saints, an article of the Creed we profess, but do not understand and act upon! A Communion of Saints! We are all in communion with one another. We all draw from the same store. We all contribute to it. Every good deed done here is set down, it is cast into the treasury. It is not lost, and it returns in blessings, not on the doer only, but on others as well. There is nothing self-seeking in Christ's religion, not even in the working-out of our salvation. While we strive to advance ourselves, we are advancing others. When we pray for ourselves we pray for others, when we bear patiently injuries inflicted on us, we are contributing endurance to others. When we wrestle with our spiritual foes, we are crippling them, for their assault on others. When we worship God in His temple, we are worshipping on behalf of others who cannot come. Thus is it that in the Church no man liveth and dieth to himself. All are bound together in one communion, with one life-blood flowing through them, and if one

member suffer all the others suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the rest rejoice as well. The health of one member heals the others, the life of one quickens the life of the others.

And thus it may happen that in God's Church the participation in Holy Things by one may profit another debarred from them, and the grace gathered by one may redound to the advantage of another. "He that hath gathered much hath nothing over; and he that has gathered little has no lack," (2 Cor. viii. 15); for from the Common Treasury of Christ, "Distribution is made unto every man according as he has need."

SERMON XIII.

WHEN TO BEGIN TO SERVE GOD.

(S. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.)

S. LUKE I. 66.

“What manner of child shall this be.”

IN the 8th Chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, is a very curious story. The prophet takes a great roll, and writes in it with a man's pen the name of Maher-shalal-hashbaz ; and then the prophetess conceives and bears a son, and the Lord says unto Isaiah, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hashbaz,” which being interpreted is, He maketh speed to get the spoil. He hasteth to the prey.

The meaning of God in this case was this,—He desired to shew in an acted parable to the people

of Judah, that from all quarters He had called men to make speed and take the spoil of the rebellious land. I think, however, that the name Maher-shal-hashbaz may be given to any one who makes speed to get the spoil, to any one who sets himself diligently, earnestly, and resolutely to gather to himself a good possession, and therefore, notably, this day, to him whom we commemorate, S. John the Baptist. He was indeed one who from childhood to death made speed to get the spoil, he was not one to waste his time, he redeemed it because the days were evil. He was not one to rest in ease and comfort, he fasted and lived in the desert. He was not one to put off the work that God had set him, "The axe is laid," he said, "unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

But above all does the name of him who speedeth to get the spoil, who maketh haste to the prey, belong to Christ, Who comes to lead captivity captive, to pluck the sting from death, to rob the grave of its victory, Who came to spoil principalities and powers, and make a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (Col. ii. 19.)
He came to spoil the Devil of his kingdom over

men, and to take the prey of human souls out of his teeth.

1. It is worthy of observation how many of the leaders and elect of God have, like John the Baptist, begun the fight young, begun to serve God young. Isaac was to become a father of nations, and he was ready as a youth to submit as a lamb to the knife of his father. (Gen. xxii.) Joseph was to be exalted second in the kingdom, and to him his father and brethren were to bow, and he at the age of seventeen was made to suffer the cruelty of his brethren, and be sold into bondage. (Gen. xxxvii.) Samuel was to become a prophet and Judge of Israel, and he was dedicated in the temple in early infancy, and spent his days ministering before God. (1 Sam. ii.) David must fight the mighty Goliath, the Philistine, and be king over God's people, and he, as a ruddy youth, had to fight the lion and the bear. (1 Sam. xvii.) Josiah was called to repair the temple and restore the law, and he ascended the throne, and began to do that which was right in the sight of the Lord at the age of eight. (2 Kings xxii.) And this day we see John the Baptist, who will testify before Herod and Herodias, as did Elias before Ahab and

Jezebel, consecrated from his mother's womb. "What manner of child shall this be?" asked all that heard of the wonders wrought at the birth of John, and I answer, He shall be Maher-shalal-hashbaz, one who maketh speed from early childhood to gain all that merit that can be gained, to do all those good works that God has ordained for him, to lay up treasure in heaven of all the spoil that his hands can grasp, to wrest the prey from the mouth of the lion, human souls from Satan, by bringing them to repentance, and so to gather to himself a great reward, eternal in the heavens.

II. Our great national poet speaks of the Seven Ages of man, but we may practically reduce them to Four, Infancy, Youth, Manhood, Old age; or, if you like to have it seven, then they consist of periods of ten years each, seven in all. Ten years a child, at twenty a youth, at thirty a man, at forty fully mature, at fifty on decline, at sixty in old age, and at seventy a child again.

In none of these spans of years is man incapable of serving God and exercising Christian virtues. Young and old are found in the militant Church on earth, and in the Church Triumphant in Heaven.

The Householder in the parable, (S. Matt. xx.) went out at different times to call in labourers to work in his vineyard, early, in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and at eventide, and to all he promised a like pay.

The Householder is God, the vineyard is His Church, the labourers are men, and the various hours are different periods of life at which they are roused to work for the Glory of God. Some are awake and working in early childhood, and work on till their sun goes down, and such were Samuel and John ; and some are called in youth, as S. John the Evangelist, and some in full manhood as S. Peter, and some in old age as Manasseh ; some even at the last hour, as the Penitent thief. To all, the heavenly Householder gives the one reward of Eternal Life. God does not look to the time spent, so much as to the work done. One hour of hard work is worth as much as ten hours of dawdling with the hoe and spade. A thousand years of indifferent doing is in God's sight but as a day ; a great many days in which naught is done will not equal one day of good labour. You may add as many noughts as you please, and they will never mount up to one.

But though this parable at first sight seems

to offer the like reward to all, whether they work for God all their lives or only at the end, it is not so in reality ; and it will not do for anyone to rule his life accordingly. It will not justify anyone, when called in the first or third hour of youth saying, I will go in the ninth or eleventh hour of my age, what is the need of my working now, when I can win the same prize later ?—it will not, I say, justify this, for though the heavenly Householder has indeed promised to those who begin to work at the end of the day that their labour shall not be in vain, yet He has not promised to those He calls early, that they shall live to the ninth and eleventh hours. “Beware, therefore,” says S. Augustine, “Lest thou by thy slackness losest what God in His liberality offers.”

God desires the flower of life and not the stalk, the kernel, and not the shell, the living foliage, and not the fallen leaf, fresh youth and not failing age.

I dare say you have not had pointed out to you the reason why God refused the sacrifice of Cain and received that of Abel. If you will turn to the 4th chapter of Genesis, I shall be able to shew you. Abel brought to God the *firstlings* of his flock, and “the Lord had respect unto Abel

and to his offering." Abel, you will see, in early spring, as soon as his ewes had lambs, brought to the Lord the very first lambs that came to him in windy March. Not so Cain. Listen to this. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." And unto Cain and to his offering God had no respect. Why? Was it that God refused the sacrifice of fruits, but delighted in that of blood? No! it was not that. It was the difference of the time of offering that made the difference in reception. Cain only brought his offering "in process of time," or, as you will see in the margin, "*at the end of days*," that is, after a long while, late in the Autumn, just before the frosts of winter set in. God accepted readily the sacrifice of Abel, made in fresh March, and He refused scornfully that of Cain, made in declining October. But that is not all. He accepted the offering of Abel, because it was promptly and at once given; that of Cain was refused because it was given in a laggard, grudging spirit, after many days,—"*in process of time*." Abel did not eat a morsel of his meat till he had offered to the Lord. He gave his firstlings. Cain gave his *lastlings*, he had been eating the

fruit all the summer, and only at the "end of days" did he offer God any.

Now apply this to yourselves, you young people. Are you going to be like Abel, and offer to the Lord your "firstlings"—the beginning of life, your fresh young spirits, your dawning faculties, your budding powers ; or going to make the most of life, and waste your powers and exhaust your energies, and devote your faculties to selfish, worldly, sensual pursuits and pleasures, intending only to give the fag-ends of all to God, "in process of time," "at the end of your days." If so, then God will not have respect unto your offering.

III. I quoted just now King Manasseh as an example of one who repented and began to work at the eleventh hour. The name Manasseh means "one who forgets." Now I do think that God will allow a place for repentance at the end of life, at the eleventh hour, for those who forget their duties and responsibilities, who therefore have idled all day through infirmity, not through wilfulness. The penitent thief was one who had forgotten till roused to recollection on the cross. But I do not think that God will summon one again who deliberately and wilfully, having been called

early, refuses to work, trusting to the chance of a second call. The thoughtless, and those who forget, are given a second chance, not the wilful and deliberate idlers.

Our Lord went hungry one morning from Bethany to Jerusalem, and He saw a fig-tree by the way, and when He came to it, He found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and He said unto it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," and presently the fig-tree withered away. This remarkable miracle was not wrought and recorded without a deep meaning being concealed in the action. What Christ signified by His act was this, He comes at all times of the day, even in the morning of childhood, to His people, even at that time when the fruit of good works is not generally expected to be found, and He demands that they shall be there. We are told by S. Mark that when this fig-tree was sought over for fruit, "the time of figs was not yet." How often do you hear it said of children and young people, "You cannot expect anything of them, they must amuse themselves, they must have their own way now, they must sow their wild oats,—the time of good fruits is not yet, that will come by and by, age, and staidness, and

thoughtfulness, and religious feeling, the time of figs is by and by." What!—O generation of vipers, hissing out these false words! Jesus Christ comes at all times of life, and at every time He expects to find fruit, good fruit; and for that fruit He hungers. In childhood, in youth, in manhood, in age, at every hour of the day, at every time of the year, at every season of life, He expects fruit, and if He finds it not He may say, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." The time of figs is now. Whenever He comes to you little fig-trees, shew your figs, to you elder plants, shew your figs, to you big trees, make no display of leaves only; figs, figs He asks of you, and to you old trees, from which the yellow leaves are falling, He comes and He asks you also to shew your figs.

SERMON XIV.

TRUE AND FALSE SHAME.

(S. PETER'S DAY.)

S. MATT. XVI. 16.

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

S. PETER is a remarkable instance to us of one moved by true and false shame, of courage also, and cowardice. None so bold as he in his profession that he would die with Christ and not desert Him, and yet when the temptation came, out of moral cowardice, out of shame to be thought one of Christ's disciples, he denied Him. False shame led him to denial of his Lord, true shame led him, at the call of the cock, to bitter repentance. With great boldness he proclaimed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” with

great cowardice he afterwards declared, "I do not know the Man."

1. There is such a thing as true shame, and there is such a thing as false shame. True shame is Christian modesty which seeks to conceal good deeds. Our Lord says, "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth ; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." In like manner with prayer, "Then when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." In like manner with fasting, "When ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, but anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

These three lessons taught by Our Lord, how to give alms, how to pray, and how to fast, all teach us true shame, or modesty in not allowing men to see that we are charitable, devout, and self-denying, and He shows that ostentation

eats all the merit out of these three good practices. They will meet with no reward at all unless they be done in a spirit of true shame.

We see then from the Sermon on the Mount that true shame is that which spices and salts every good work, and preserves it from corruption. I may give all my goods to feed the poor, and if I have not shame-facedness, it profiteth me nothing. I may pray by the hour, but if I pray ostentatiously, I get no answer. I may fast—no, it is of no use speaking of that, nobody fasts now-a-days, Our Lord's advice on this head is regarded as no longer applicable, we have done away with fasting, and so I need say nothing more about it here. The reason why these good practices are to be secret is also given,—because they bring praise and admiration on the head of him who performs them. When our Lord spoke, a man who prayed was thought a great deal of, and so also was one who fasted. Things are different now. A man who prays a good deal is thought a weak, unpractical, half-crazy fellow ;—and one who fasts !—who fasts !—Heaven preserve us from such folly ! Bedlam for the man who is such a fool as to fast !

A farmer, a good, pious, intelligent man, said

to me one day, "My son has quite gone off his mind at last, and I have had to put him into an asylum. He was peculiar for some time, and I did not take much notice of it, but then he began to pray all day—and when he did *that*, I was sure he was thoroughly crazy."

You see that the conditions are now reversed. In our Lord's time a man was high in repute, if he prayed and fasted, and Christ exhorted his followers to conceal their fasting and praying, so that they might not have praise of men. But now His advice can hardly apply to these two things. A man sinks like lead in popular opinion if he prays and fasts; therefore the motive for concealment is over. He will get the praise of men if he does not fast and pray, and he will incur the contempt of men if he does.

In the same sermon in which our Lord exhorted to this concealment of good deeds, He said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In that, He exhorts to an openness which shall not affect concealment. He exhorts to openness because good conduct acts on others, to encourage them to do good as well.

Let the light of your faith shine forth, do not try to put a bushel over that, and be not shame-faced about confessing that.

Let the light of your public worship shine forth, do not be ashamed to be seen at church and at Communion, you encourage others by your example.

Let the light of your moral conduct shine forth, and it will tacitly rebuke what is wrong and unseemly. Do not be ashamed to be strict and regular, and pure, and truthful, and temperate, but be bold and confess that you will not sanction, or laugh at, or pass over what is the contrary.

Here is a very simple test what to hide and what to allow to be seen. When any good act is likely to bring credit to you, conceal it ; when it is sure to bring ridicule upon you, be not ashamed to let it be seen.

II. Unfortunately in the world men are generally ashamed to let what is good be seen, and not at all ashamed to show what is wrong.

When Jonathan delivered David from the wrath of Saul it was by a secret stratagem, he shot an arrow, and David took warning by the arrow, and ran away. (1 Sam. xx.) But when Absalom revolted against David his father,

there was no secrecy at all, the trumpets were sounded in Hebron, and his confederates shouted, "Absalom is King." (2 Sam. xv. 10.) Nicodemus came to Jesus by night to hear Him, timid and fearful of being seen. But the daughter of Herodias had no shame in asking openly for the head of John the Baptist before the whole court at a banquet. Abraham, when he feasted the three Angels, went himself to fetch a calf from the herd, he was shy to send a servant and let it be known he was dealing so liberally with wayfar- ing men (Gen. xviii.); but Judah had no shame in sending a shepherd with a goat to a wayside harlot (Gen. xxxviii).

Is it not true that we are ashamed of what is good? We are ashamed to profess ourselves Churchmen. We are ashamed to show ourselves sincere in our religious profession. We are ashamed to be seen going more than once on Sunday to church. We are ashamed to kneel instead of sitting in prayer. We are ashamed to have it known that we are communicants. We are ashamed to let it be thought we have any reverence for holy things, any respect for God's commandments.

This is a false shame, a wretched cowardly

shame. How different from this was the feeling of David. When he brought up the ark to Sion from the house of Obed-edom, his heart was full of gladness, "And David danced before the Lord with all his might, and David was girded with a linen ephod," but his wife, Saul's daughter Michal, looked through a window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; "and she despised him in her heart." And she came out sneeringly before him, as he returned, and said "How glorious was the King of Israel to-day, making a clown of himself, and exposing himself to ridicule before the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the empty headed fellows shamelessly exposes himself." Now this was one of the hardest things to bear; to be sneered at and turned into ridicule by his own wife. David's soul had been lifted up, and he had danced for very joy of heart, and love of God; he had quite forgotten himself in his zeal for God's glory, and happiness to have the ark in his own city—it was possible he might have acted unbecomingly as a king, but his heart had been too full for him to think of the proprieties, and now he gets this slap in the face from his wife. What does he say? "I danced before the Lord

Who chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord ;—therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight.” See this noble zeal ! After the cruel scoff, instead of hanging his head and blushing red, he holds his head up, and answers her to the face, that God has done great things for him, and he is not ashamed to show God how grateful he is. If he have made himself ridiculous, he does not care, he will do all he can to show his love and honour, and let them sneer who will. O, my brethren ! have we anything approaching to this courage ? Are we not filled with false shame ? Do we not shrink from the smallest breath of ridicule that may touch us on account of our religion ? I have known people give up reverential acts in church, as bowing to the altar, or at the Holy Name, or kneeling in the prayers. I have known them even give up coming to church for fear of being laughed at. O, false Christians ! Cowardly Christians ! Think of David, how he answered Michal when she mocked.

King Alexander the Great had a cowardly soldier in his army whose name was Alexander,

and the king said to him, "Change your name, or conduct yourself as becomes an Alexander." And I say to you, to you who call yourselves Christians, act as Christian soldiers, be bold, or change your name and call yourselves heathens, or infidels, or what you like, only not Christians.

How fearful you are about "What will people say?" Ask rather "What will Christ say?" O, weathercock, to be blown about by every breath, and point to any quarter of the compass. There was a great nobleman in Scotland long ago, who took as his motto, and set up on the front of his castle these words: "They say. What say they? Let them say." Do as he did. Let people say what they will, that is nothing to you. You look to Christ's love for approval and not to theirs. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," says Solomon (Proverbs xxix. 25); and Christ says, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the Holy Angels." (Luke ix. 28). "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 33).

SERMON XV.

GRACE AND FREE WILL.

(S. JAMES' DAY.)

S. MATT., xx., 22.

“They say unto Him, we are able.”

ALL men are not able to do all they will, and all men are not willing to do all they can. In my opinion it is more important to will than to be able to do a thing. There are many difficulties stand in the way, and compass about the performance of duties, and the attainment of eminent virtues, but those difficulties, which seem “a lion in the way” to the half-hearted, are but shadows, when faced boldly. The mountain that seems inaccessible is half-climbed when

the resolution is formed to set foot on the summit. I said one day to a guide in Iceland, pointing to a vast snowy range of mountains, from which glaciers swept down, "Would you not like to stand on those peaks?" "Why should I?" he replied, "I can see the peaks whilst I sit on this stone."

Is not that the attitude of a vast number of Christians towards the heights of perfection which God has set before them as the object to which they should attain? In the Gospel we have shown us what we ought to do, how high we ought to stand above the moral and spiritual level we now occupy. And when I, or some other preacher, points to the Gospel type of perfection, and say to you, Look how lofty is the height which you should strive to attain! Look at the pattern set before you! Why are you not up, and pressing forward to reach it? Then all the answer I get is one very much the same as that of my Iceland guide, "Why should I? I can read my Bible, and see what I want to see, without any personal exertion, and I can take my ease sitting on this stone."

I say that when once the resolution is formed to overcome an obstacle, half the difficulty is

mastered. When once the determination is formed to advance to perfection half the way is run. I like to hear that hearty reply of the apostles James and John, "We are able." It is refreshing to come across two men who knew their own minds. Before them are the thrones in heaven, and these they desire to reach. Christ sets before them what they must be prepared to undergo. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of; and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He sees before Him the cup of anguish, and the sweat of blood in Gethsemane, the cup of anguish He was to drain, the sweat of blood in which He was to be baptized, and He asks of James and John if they are able to undergo the like.

How fresh and hearty is their reply. It does one's soul good to hear it. "We are able." They had one thing more to learn, but they had the ready will, and that was a principal thing. The one thing more they had to learn was, that they would need Divine Grace to help them. The will was there, but the strength was not equal to the will. When the hour of trial came, and Christ was in the Garden, and the cup of anguish was put to His lips, and the baptism of

blood was on Him, these two willing hearts failed. "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" S. Peter also had a ready will, and he failed; and the reason why all three were not as good as their word was because they trusted in their own natural strength, and the Holy Ghost, the Strengtheners, was not yet come to endow them with the necessary fortitude. But after that they were endowed with strength from on high, there was no shirking of the cup, no withdrawal from the baptism of blood. S. Peter and S. John showed no timidity after Pentecost. They spake boldly in the name of Christ. "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel," said S. Peter, before the council of the high priest, to the face of Annas and Caiaphas who had condemned Christ, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him have we wrought this notable miracle. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner.—Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,—they marvelled." (Acts iv. 10-13). Nor was S. James a whit behind these other apostles; he, it

is believed, carried the gospel into Spain, and we know that he suffered martyrdom at Jerusalem by order of Herod Agrippa. They have won now the thrones in heaven for which they longed. They have climbed those ascents to reach which they so resolutely set forth. The cup is drunk, the baptism has been undergone, and they are yet to sit on thrones at the Last Day, as assessors of Christ. They have been able, assisted by grace, to do all that they undertook. The crown has been the prize of a race, the throne of a battle. The roses are not to be plucked without a wounding of the hand by the thorns, the honeycomb is not to be eaten without running the risk of the bee-sting, and the shore is not to be attained without plunging into the stream and swimming.

How often in after life must SS. James and John have thought of their undertaking ! When wearied with their work, and cast down by disappointment, ready to abandon a task that seemed beyond their strength and hopeless, they must have recalled their assurance, " We are able," and have resumed their work with fresh vigour. " We undertook the work, and must carry it through." In suffering and persecution, when

the flesh quivered with pain, and a cruel death was before their eyes, the mind may have shrunk from the prospect, but then plucked up resolution again, "We are able, we undertook to endure this, and so, endure it we will."

The great difficulty with Christians is to get them to say, "We are able." Everything they are commanded to do, or that it is well for them to do, is too hard. "We are not able." All things are possible to them that have faith, and a will to do them. All good things can be gained by those who have a will to try for them. Every difficulty can be overcome by those who have a will to master difficulties. But nothing is done, nothing gained, nothing mastered, because we sigh forth, "We are not able."

We are not able!—I say, We are, we are, we are able. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13). Do we live under the Law or under Grace? Are we left to our own unassisted efforts? Has not the Holy Spirit come down on the Church? Is not one of His gifts—Fortitude? And is He not now in the Church and ready to animate and invigorate every Christian? Yes, yes! The Grace is here, that is not wanting. What lacks

is the ready Will. Would to God we had some lusty Christians among us who would say, "We are able," and begin to strive manfully for the prize of their high calling. I am weary of your sitting down on these benches, and staring up at the perfection set before you in the Gospel, and when asked to reach forward and attain it, say "We are not able."

We are not able to do what ?—Not able to fight against our besetting sin. Not able to overcome this or that bad habit. Not able to begin to pray. Not able to turn over a new leaf. Not able to take a line. Not able to become a communicant. Not able to be humble-minded. Not able to do works of repentance. Not able to feel any hunger and thirst after righteousness. Not able to forgive those who have done you a wrong. Not able to be pure in heart and life. Not able to refrain from answering railing with railing, and give a soft answer, turning away wrath. Not able to endure the least ridicule, or undergo the slightest inconvenience, for righteousness sake. Not able, because it is wet, to come to church. Not able, because it is early, to come to Communion. Not able, because it is late, to attend evensong. O no! not at all able to do

anything that is good, anything that could make your souls grow strong, anything that could give you a push forward on your way to perfection. All that is quite impossible, "We are not able."

But, I will tell you what you are able to do. You are able to do everything that the world, and the flesh, or the devil, hints to you. No trouble at all then. No difficulty stands in the way. With the greatest of pleasure, we are able. We are able to lie, we are able to slander, we are able to defraud others, we are able to get drunk, we are able to use God's name in vain, we are able to lie in bed all Sunday morning, when we ought to be kneeling before God's altar. We are able to idle our time away. We are able to quarrel and scold, we are able to give a sharp insulting answer to one who is rude to us. We are able to use impure language, and do impure deeds. We are able to scoff with the scoffers at holy things. We are able to squander our supply of Grace. We are able to stain our Baptismal robe. We are able to take the broad road that leadeth to destruction, and we are able to go to Hell.

The prophet Zephaniah makes a sharp reproof

against Jerusalem. He says that Jerusalem is filthy and polluted with her sins, she has not obeyed the voice of God calling her to repentance, she has disregarded His correction, she has been indifferent, and has not drawn near to God, she has put her trust elsewhere than in Him; but the prophet adds, a change will come at last, or God will destroy Jerusalem as He has destroyed other rebellious cities, and the change must consist in this, "They shall all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." (Zeph. iii. 9). This is the English version, but this is not what the prophet wrote, but what the translators thought he ought to have written. The original Hebrew is "to serve him with *one shoulder*." It is in this that true conversion consists, the putting the shoulder to the wheel, the submitting the shoulder to the burden. There must be a resolute effort made, an evidence that there is a ready will. God does not ask both shoulders, only one, He lightens the load off the second shoulder with His hand, His Grace takes off half the burden, supplies half the strength, but the Will, the earnest, hearty, determined will to push and carry, must be there, and without that nothing is done.

Now, my Brethren, I say to you earnestly, Put your shoulder to the wheel, take the burden on one shoulder, and you will get on. "You are able" to do any thing, to move mountains, to bear any burden, to advance to any height of perfection, with the assistance of God's Grace, which is given liberally to him that asks for it, and shows the will to use it.

And now, in conclusion, I will tell you a story.

The Duke of Osuna was governor of Madrid. At that time the town was infested with swarms of idle fellows who pretended to be cripples, and sat on the bridges, and in the square, and hung about the corners of the streets, begging. The nuisance became intolerable, so the duke ordered the police to sweep the whole crew together one day into his hall. Now when they came in, they saw that a rope was stretched across the hall which they might not pass. The Duke entered, and inspected the beggars. They were all clamorous in their distress. This man could not work because he had only one arm. That one because he had a stiff leg. A third had a bad knee, a fourth had a fractured thigh, a fifth a twisted arm, and so on. Every one had some deformity,

or had met with some accident which kept him from working. Then the Duke flung a handful of money over the rope, and said, "Take that, cripples! Over the rope with you!" At once, away went the crutches and sticks, and the beggars leaped the ropes, and the lame ran, and those with stiff and twisted arms stretched out both to seize the money. Only a few remained behind unable to clear the rope. "Ah!" said the Duke, to the police, "You see the true cripples from those who are impostors. Carry off all the impostors and drive them to the mines."

Now, I tell you, all of you, that you are every bit as much impostors before God, if you do not work for His glory and your own sanctification. "You are not able indeed!" Away with this excuse. You are able to run fast enough and jump high enough for anything you can get in this world, but when it comes to work for God and your own souls, "We are not able." Cripples! Cripples! away with this deception. You are able, Christ being your helper. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

SERMON XVI.

PUTTING OFF THE OLD ADAM.

(S. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.)

COL. III. 9.

“Ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

WHEN I see the Lord Jesus in the Gospel ordaining His Twelve Apostles, I remember the twelve springs of clear water of which the Israelites, escaped from Egypt, drank at Elim, for have not these Twelve Apostles been sources whence has flowed the pure water of life, of which many nations have drunk and been refreshed? I remember the twelve pillars of the altar which Moses built under Sinai, as a memorial of the receiving of the law, for have not these Twelve

Apostles been pillars of Christ's Church, set up as a memorial of the New Law of Love He has given to man? I remember the twelve stones in the breast plate of Aaron, for have not these Twelve Apostles stood near to the heart of Jesus, our High Priest, and shone there with various virtues? I remember the twelve princes whom Moses chose out of the tribes to lead them to battle, for have not these Twelve Apostles been to us as princes leading us into the great conflict that has been waged from their day to this, and will be to the end of time, between the world and the Church? I remember the twelve consecrated loaves laid on the table of shewbread before the Lord in the Tabernacle, for have not these Twelve Apostles nourished many with their heavenly doctrine? I think of the twelve spies whom Moses sent to spy out the Promised Land, for have not these Twelve Apostles been blessed spies who have gone before us into the good land, the land promised us by Christ, to see its beauty? I remember the twelve foundation-stones of the heavenly Jerusalem, for these are the Apostles of Christ, on whom the whole Church in heaven and earth is erected.

Among these foundation-stones of the Church

we this day commemorate S. Bartholomew, who preached the word in Lycaonia, and suffered a cruel martyrdom in Armenia. According to the received tradition, he was flayed alive. This horrible mode of death was one by no means uncommon in the East, where monarchs seem to have exercised a devilish skill in devising and carrying out the most painful modes of torture. The skin was leisurely taken off with a knife, and the entire body exposed raw to the sun and air. Under this agony, we may trust that life soon became extinct.

There is an instance in much more recent history, which I will mention to you. When the Turks were besieging the island and fortress of Rhodes, a Christian offered the Sultan to betray one of the gates if he would give him his daughter in marriage. Sultan Suleiman consented, and Rhodes became the prey of the Turks. Then the Christian traitor went before the Sultan, and demanded the price of his treachery. "You shall have my daughter," answered he, "but as you were baptized a Christian, we must first strip off the Christian skin before you will be fit to marry a Mohammedan." And he ordered him to be flayed alive.

Now, brethren, there is a Bride awaits you,—the Heavenly Jerusalem—but you must first be flayed, that is, you must first be “renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 23-24). S. Paul goes on to say what must be put off. “Ye must put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—wherefore putting away lying speak truth.” “Put off anger, let not the sun go down on your wrath. Put off dishonesty, and labour to give to him that needeth. Put off corrupt communication proceeding out of the mouth, and put on that which is edifying. Put off all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice, and put on kindness, tender-heartedness, forgiveness of injuries.”

You see, S. Paul requires you all to be flayed, to have the skin of the old Adam ripped off, and the new tender skin of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, grown on you instead, and only so shall you be worthy of the heavenly Jerusalem.

In another place S. Paul returns to the same idea. He says, “Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man,

which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created us." (Col. iii. 9-10.) I think he has before his mind the serpent, which puts off its old skin from time to time, as it gets old and worn, and puts on a new bright skin, which is thus renewed continually.

In the epistle from which this text is taken, S. Paul fills up the sketch, and tells us of what the old skin consists, and what the new skin is like. He says, "Put off fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, in which ye walked some time when ye lived in them,"—that is the old skin, a skin impure and corrupt. He goes on, "But now put off all these ; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications out of your mouth." He adds an account of the new skin. "Put on, therefore, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, and above all these things put on charity." In the Epistle to the Romans, he again alludes to the same thought. "Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,—reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 6-11.) After

that, in the same way as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the Epistle to the Colossians, S. Paul goes on to describe the old skin that is cast off, and the new skin that grows in its place. "Yield ye not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

There are somewhat similar ideas in his Epistle to the Galatians, as, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

I never quite understood what S. Paul had in his mind in these passages, till I one day saw a boy with a forked stick on which was hanging the old cast skin of a snake. When a serpent wishes to change his skin, he seeks a cleft stick, or one with a fork in it, and he glides through this, so that he is nipped by the sides, and this pulls the old skin off him, beginning at the head, and peels it down the whole way, and thus it is left, caught and hanging to the stick, while the animal goes off in its glossy, new, and beautiful coat. I have very little doubt that S. Paul had seen this, perhaps the boys carried the skins about hanging to the sticks, in his day, and the idea struck him

that this was just like Christians who slough off their old evil nature, and go on their way in their new and heavenly nature, and the old evil nature they leave attached to Christ's Cross, through which they have been enabled to cast it off. When you have this picture before your eyes you will be able to understand several of S. Paul's expressions ; this illustration occurs to him repeatedly. He calls the old skin the body of death, the old skin was death, the new is life, the old skin was the body of sin, the new is righteousness. The sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it seems to me, is best understood by keeping this figure before you.

“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” says S. Paul again (Rom. xiii. 14). It is still the same idea, the new skin is to be after the image of Christ, and the old skin with its chambering and wantonness, strife and envying, is to be put off ; and this new skin he calls also the armour of light, glittering with shiny scales, like the new coat of the serpent. In the Epistle to the Galatians he tells us when the sloughing of the old skin begins, and the manifestation of the new skin takes place,—at baptism. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put

on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). All the after life is the peeling off of the old evil nature, and the bringing to light of the new Christ-like nature. The old is not got rid of all at once, but by little and little. The labour of getting out of the old skin is not an easy one ; it is altogether a mistake to regard it as instantaneous.

Now, my brethren, try daily to slough off a little more of the old skin, to leave behind you whatever there is of evil in your nature, and to manifest daily more and more the beautiful Christ-like nature. Where there are evil habits, these must be overcome and cast behind you, and this is not easily or quickly done.

A nobleman came to S. Bernard for advice, as he had fallen into a very vicious habit. S. Bernard said to him, " You must give it up." " That I can't do. It sticks so fast to me, that I cannot shake it off." " Very well," said S. Bernard, " for the love of God resolve to keep from it for three days." He did so, and then came to S. Bernard ; then the saint said, " For the fear of God keep from it three days more ;" and he did so ; then said the saint, " Look up at the holy ones of God, and as you have one day to meet them, abstain three days more ;" and he did so ;

and so he drew him on, by one excuse after another, till the old bad skin began to give way, and the bright silvery new skin to appear; and one day the nobleman said to him, "I will abstain from my evil habit now altogether, I find it is easier to shake off than I supposed," and so the old skin was lost.

I think it would not be amiss with those who have bad habits of any sort, to attempt to overcome them in much the same way, little by little. The difficulty is at the beginning, just as the snake slips out of his skin without so much hardship when once it begins to tear away at the throat. There must be a first break with the bad habit, before it can be mastered and cast away.

And remember, lastly, that we are not to spend all our days with little strips and rags of our old evil nature hanging about us, but to clear them all off, and the whole of life is to consist in a purging away of what is evil, and a manifesting of what is good. We shall never indeed be quite perfect here, but we must strive to attain unto perfection, and we must crucify our old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin, so far as we can, assisted by Grace, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our Faith.

SERMON XVII.

G O D ' S C A L L S .

(S. MATTHEW'S DAY.)

S. MATT. IX. 9.

“ He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him.

OUR eyes are generally directed towards the miracles of our Lord which He wrought on the bodies of men, the loosening of the dumb tongue, the opening of the blind eyes, the restoration of health to the leper and the paralytic, and also to such a miracle as the raising of the dead. But there are other miracles than these that He wrought, and these were spiritual. Of such we have only a few examples, but chief of these is the Conversion of S. Matthew. The miracles

of healing of men's bodies Christ no longer works, but the age of spiritual miracles is not over. It is not, perhaps, often that we see a remarkable conversion, a man once possessed by many devils clothed and in his right mind, or one rising up and leaving all and following Christ, but still such miracles do occur now-a-days.

When the magicians in Egypt saw the marvels wrought by the rod of Moses, the water turned to blood, the frogs sent into the palaces, the dust turned into lice, then they said, "This is the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 19). They were forced to admit a supernatural power that they could not understand. If we had none of the miracles of the Gospel recorded, and had only the sight of conversions such as that of S. Matthew, of those who had led bad lives becoming humble and carefully living Christians, of those whose minds had been devoted to business pursuits turning and seeking the kingdom of God, and living only for that, then still, I think, we could not fail to acknowledge a supernatural power in Christianity, and to say "This is the finger of God." Levi, who sat at the receipt of custom, engrossed in his worldly gains, suddenly rises from his counter, throws up his office, and be-

comes an Apostle and Evangelist. He who had been careful to collect money for himself, now is wholly indifferent to it, all goes into the common purse, and that is entrusted to an unworthy steward. If the tradition may be relied on, which has long been held in the Church, Matthew preached the Gospel in Æthiopia, and was put to death by being run through with a spear.

S. Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, says, "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," God willeth not the death of a sinner. Our Lord Himself said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 16-17). "The Lord," says S. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 9) "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God calls all men to follow Christ, and to repentance from dead works, to serve the living God, but as all have got free wills, He can do no more than call. He cannot drive them like a flock of sheep along the road that leads to eternal

life, He can do no more than invite them into it. Those who are his true sheep hear His voice and follow, but others, by a free exercise of their wills, refuse to follow, and remain where they are, sitting at the receipt of custom.

I am going to speak to you to-day about the way in which God calls ; but I bid you bear well in mind that He can do no more than call, the acceptance or rejection of His call lies with you. He can say to you, Follow Me, He cannot however force you to do so, if you will you can refuse obedience.

1. God calls by startling events, or by troubles, or losses, sometimes by great blessings. "Turn ye," God calls, "even to Me with all your heart." (Joel ii. 12). And the voices by which He calls are numerous, crosses, pains, afflictions, contrarieties. S. Macarius in one of his sermons very truly says, "It often happens that God rouses man by vexations and tribulations, lest he, when he sees all succeed under his hands, should be steeped in his worldly business, and forget God ; He calls Him that he may think, As I cannot have in this world what I want, I will turn away from it, and look to God, and serve Him."

In the twenty-ninth Psalm, David speaks of the voice of God, and the mighty works wrought by it. The voice of the Lord, he says, "maketh the hinds to bring forth young," that is, in the forest the hinds are startled by the crash of thunder that bursts over their heads, and drop their young. And many a good resolution and amendment, many a new birth unto righteousness is due to some startling, crashing shock. God speaks in an overwhelming manner, in some terrible and striking manner, and then the new and feeble life begins, the new life of Christian virtue which will wax daily stronger. Troubles are goads to drive us out of the wrong road into that which is right. Troubles are lancets opening and probing our wounds, to relieve them of the poisonous matter that lies below, corrupting the blood. Troubles are sunbeams piercing and scattering the clouds that cover our sky and shut out our sight of heaven. Troubles are bitter bark, necessary for us to preserve us from fever, the fever of a sinful life.

But how is the voice of God received? The word of God came from heaven, and cast Nebuchadnezzar into madness, and by little it wrought in him humility, and he lifted up his eyes to heaven

and blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him, "all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride," he confessed; "He is able to abase" (Dan. iv. 37).

The Ninevites heard the word of God threatening them with destruction, and they repented of their evil, and amended their ways. On the other hand, when Ahaz sinned, God sent against him the Syrians, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, and the Philistines; then when in his distress he implored assistance of the King of Assyria, and was denied it, then we read, "in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord" (2 Chron. xxviii. 22). "Thou hast stricken them," says Jeremiah, "but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." (Jerem. v. 3).

II. But God calls also with blessings, he gives abundance, he gives a happy family, good healthy children, a beloved wife, He gives strength and health to work. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of

a man, with bands of love ; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." (Hos. xi. 3-4). That is to say, God draws with love, relieving men of heavy burdens, and He leads them on as a beast is drawn by an offer of grass or corn. What is the result? Sometimes indeed the heart is lifted up to God by prosperity, the love of God calls more violently than His severity, but sometimes, alas, the contrary ensues. As Eliphaz the Temanite says, in the twenty-second chapter of Job, "They say unto God, Depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for them? Yet He filled their houses with good things."

III. God also calls through the mouth of His preachers. He sends them for the very purpose of rousing men to follow Christ. They call the sinner to repentance, they call the slothful to activity, they call the erring to the right way, they call the indifferent to earnestness.

It is when they are not listened to, that it becomes needful for God to speak with the voice of thunder, and send affliction to arouse. If men would only listen to the exhortations of His servants, He need not speak Himself.

In the parable of the vineyard we have this enforced. The householder has a vineyard hedged round, guarded by a tower, and he lets it out to husbandmen. "And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it; and the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." "What will the lord do unto those husbandmen? He will miserably destroy those wicked men." (Matt. xxi). They do not now persecute and kill the servants of Christ, they simply listen to their message and take no notice of it. The Lord will not destroy them for this, but He will chastise them to make them attend to His message. And the reason why men do not hear the call of God by His servants is given by Zechariah (vii. 12.): "They made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words, which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by the prophets;" then follows the consequence, "Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of Hosts."

The call of God is received by you in this way. You discuss the mouth-piece, and not the message. You talk over the preacher, one finds fault with



his delivery, another with the way in which he has handled his subject, another thinks his illustrations inappropriate, each thinks, Has this hit anyone hard? and one says, He is too personal, and another, He is not plain spoken enough; and so you set to work to pick the preacher to pieces and pay no heed to what he has called you to do. That is like, when a trumpet is sounded to call to battle, the soldiers taking the instrument and examining the construction, wondering over the stops, how they are contrived, and unscrewing the ivory mouthpiece, and trying the quality of the brass, but taking no notice of the call to arms, and to be on their guard.

iv. Lastly, God calls secretly by speaking in private to the heart. "Behold," says Christ, (Rev. iii. 20,) "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."

This is Christ speaking to the conscience with that still small voice which always warns against an evil course, and exhorts to good. When Elijah was in Horeb upon the mount before the Lord, God passed by, and a great strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks; but the voice of the Lord was not in the

wind ; and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a still small voice. " And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle." And what said the voice ? " What doest thou here, Elijah ? " That was all. Elijah's place was not in the desert, he was a prophet with a mission to reprove the idolatries of Jezebel. He should not have been on the mount, but in the midst of the people. He was seeking his own salvation in fasting and prayer, but he was neglecting his special vocation. He was doing a good work, but not the work that God had set him. That was why the still small voice spake. But God speaks to others in the thunder, and out of the storm, and through the fire, and in the earthquake, but that is not to those who are seeking Him and serving him, but to those who will not hearken to any other voice. To all who are bent on doing God's work, if they attempt it in the wrong way, or if through cowardice they avoid, or through indolence neglect their special work, the work God has set them apart to perform, then to them He speaks in the still small voice.

And now, remember how God calls, through tribulations, through blessings, through His ministers, and lastly through conscience. And finally, accept the advice of David:—"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Psalm xcv. 8.)

SERMON XVIII.

DOING GOOD IN OUR GENERATION.

(S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.)

HEB. II. 14.

“Are they not all ministering Spirits.”

THERE is a very remarkable book which purports to have been written by Dionysius, a disciple of S. Paul, on the “Hierarchy of Angels.” This book we can hardly allow to be of the date claimed for it, at least in its present form, but it is, for all that, a work full of interest and instruction. The doctrine of this book may be summed up in a few words, and it is this. Of the Angels there are many Orders, as Cherubim and Seraphim, Dominations, Thrones, Principalities, Powers. Some of these stand nearer to

God than others, and all have their several functions, derived from God. The Angels which stand nearest to God derive from Him their light that illumines their understanding, and they turn towards those below them, and reflect their light down upon them. Those on the second stage, having received the light, reflect it to those below them, and so the light and knowledge of God is passed down the entire scale of spiritual beings, handed from one to the other. Those far below do not receive their illumination directly from God, but mediately from those above them. And it is the same in the scale of creation, each stage in life is illumined by that which is above, and passes the light to that below, thus the entire Order of Angels, and men, and creatures is bound together in a common looking upwards to the Light-giver, and in a common obligation of illumining the stage of life that lies beneath.

S. Dionysius wrote a second book which, unfortunately, is lost, on the "Hierarchy of the Church," in which no doubt he followed out the same idea, and showed that in it each rank receives its light from the rank above, and illumines in turn the rank below.

The idea is exceedingly beautiful, and there is an immense amount of truth in it.

Let us consider whether this is not true of the material objects and the light of the sun. I think it is so. The moon and planets move round the sun and catch his light, and they shine down on the earth. The moon turns her face to the sun and drinks in his light, but does not retain it, she moves round us, and pours out upon us the beautiful light she has received. I dare say you have noticed how when you are sitting in a room, if a pigeon flies past the window in the sun, a flash of light enters the chamber. It is the reflection of her white wings. Everything that is in the light communicates light. In a dark room the sun enters by a tiny crack, and in the ray you see ten thousand motes dancing. You see them because they are particles floating in the air, each catches the light, but it also reflects it, and the walls, and ceiling, and every corner of the room are filled with some light, passed on from mote to mote. In the moon there is no atmosphere, and no dancing particles, and when the sunlight falls on the surface of the moon there is only the ground to catch and reflect it, consequently even in sunlight the moon

is never quite full of light, for under shadow of a rock or stone, is blackness of darkness. You see what a wonderful power these little motes have, which, except in a ray of sunlight, are unseen.

In the intellectual world, the light of knowledge is handed on from one to another, in much the same way. There are high intelligences, which make great discoveries, and these they communicate to others, and so their knowledge filters down to the lowest minds in the scale. There are truths which we, in low stages, cannot discover for ourselves, as that the world turns round the sun, how to utilise the lightning, &c. We receive these, handed down to us by tradition from the discoverers to others, and so to our teachers, and we receive them on faith, and we believe that the earth is round and moves about the sun, and we make use of the telegraph to send messages.

It is the same with all we know, we have received it from others, and we do not keep our knowledge to ourselves, we shed it upon others, they participate in our fulness. Thus, knowledge cannot be hid, it is passed on from one to another, and as more and more is acquired by those on the highest steps, more and more is reflected

down, and the darkness of ignorance passes away.

In the Church, the same law holds. Our faith has been handed down from the Apostles, our Orders have been transmitted; all we receive is from above, and it is given to us that therewith we may illumine and strengthen those who are below us. To live for self is un-Christian; the law of Christianity is the passing on to others of the good we have received. This was felt by S. Peter and S. John when they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The high priest and scribes arrested them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts iv. 19-20). In like manner S. Paul says that it would be woe to him if he preached not this Gospel. The Apostles were great light-receivers, so that the obligation lay upon them to give the light to others. The Gospel was revealed to them, and their function was to reveal it to the world.

I remember when I was a child, visiting the

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rock fortress of Königstein in Saxony. This fortress is supplied with water from a well of prodigious depth, in the court-yard of the castle. "But though it be of such vast depth," said the old man who showed us over the place, "I can throw the sun into the water at the bottom." Then he got some looking glasses, so contrived as to cast the light from one to another, and so down into the depth. He arranged the apparatus so that the sun shone on the glass at top, and that sent the flash on to the second, and that to the third, and in a moment the bottom of the deep well was full of light, the golden sun was there gleaming up out of the water several hundred feet below.

This is a picture of what is going on in the world. That is full of dark places and profound depths of ignorance and misery, but the light of the Sun of Righteousness is being flashed down into the utmost deeps, from one Christian to another, so that the truth in time reaches all. All are looking-glasses, not giving light of their own, but all reflecting the light they receive, and that light comes down from God, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

I sometimes remember this when I am looking over my old volumes of theological writers, and

preachers, who lived two or three hundred years ago, in search of some ideas, or illustrations, to retail to you, and I think, Here are these old men who wrote and spoke many generations ago, and their volumes have slept as quietly as themselves, in libraries, and none have cared to turn them over, and now I pick out of them sacred illustrations which I give to you to enlighten your minds, and make the truths of the Gospel more clear to you. Where they got these I do not know, but this light has shot down through two or three hundred years upon my mind, and thence I flash it over you. But what I teach you must not remain with you. If from me you learn any truth, acquire any light, you must pass it on. In your families are children, in your fields are fellow-workmen, in your kitchens are fellow-servants, and the light you receive is not to be hid, but given to them. We are called to be transmitters of light, and if we are not, then we fail in fulfilling the duty imposed on us by God.

Unfortunately, it is true, that just as light, and truth, and goodness, can be transmitted, so can also darkness, and falsehood, and evil. This is how there is so much misery in the world, the plague is communicated faster than health. We

can darken understandings as well as enlighten them, we can teach error as well as truth, we can set bad example as well as good. Consider how dreadful this is ! Instead of doing the work of light, and brightening the world, to be apostles of darkness, and sinking it in deeper gloom. Instead of being physicians healing its wounds and sickness, to be carrying infection to the whole, and bringing them to moral ruin.

“Woe unto the world,” says our Lord, “because of offences ; for it must needs be that offences come ; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.”

This passage occurs in the Gospel for to-day. We have been considering the Angels as transmitting light in degrees from one to another, and now, from the Gospel for their day, we learn that there is a transmission of darkness from one to another as well. As the Angels shed light from above, so the smoke of darkness rises from the bottomless pit.

On which side are you going to be found ? On that of light or on that of darkness ? Are you going to do some good in your generation, to heal some of its disorders, to disperse some of its darkness, to brighten some of the cheerless lives, to

kindle some of the dull intelligences, to purify some of the soiled hearts by your instruction or your example? Then you are doing the work of the Angels and of the true Christian, but if, through you, evil in any form spreads, the kingdom of darkness is in any way extended, then are you messengers and tools of the Evil One.

One last word. Beware also, all you who seek to communicate light to others, parents and teachers, lest, while you give others light, you keep none for yourselves. On a Polar expedition a party were without means of kindling a fire. Then they cut a crystal of ice, and with that focussed the sun's rays on tinder. The sun kindled the tinder, but the ice remained ice. It may be so too with you, and S. Paul feared lest he preaching to others should himself be a cast-away. If you teach others, believe yourself, if you lead others to pray, pray yourself, if you heal others, heal yourself. Like the Good Shepherd who, when He puts forth His sheep, goes before them, so do you by your example, lead the way, that others may tread in your steps. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

SERMON XIX.

SICKNESS OF THE SOUL.

(S. LUKE'S DAY.)

COL. IV. 14.

“Luke, the beloved physician.”

I THINK that one of the saddest records of human infirmity, is that of king David in his extreme old age. You may remember how, after the defeat and death of Absalom, he returned over Jordan, and nobly forgave Shimei, who had cursed him in the day of his distress. Shimei came to him and fell down at his feet, and said, “Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of

Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned : therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet the lord the king." And when Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, desired to smite him with the sword, David was wroth, generously forgave Shimei, and swore that he should not die.

Long after, David was old and stricken in years, and he felt that death was approaching, then he called to him his son Solomon, whom he had crowned in Jerusalem, and gave him his final charge. What was that charge? He could only in his extreme old age think of three men, Joab, Barzillai and Shimei ; and his last dying desire was that two of these, Joab and Shimei, should be put to death. "Behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim ; but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless,—but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood."

Joab had been his general, a rough, headstrong

man, who had done much violence, but he had been faithful to his king till quite the end of his life, when he turned a ready ear to Adonijah. David exhorted Solomon from his death-bed, "Thou knowest what Joab, the son of Zeruiah, did to me—do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace" (1 Kings ii). I am not surprised at the injunction with respect to Joab, though he was now an old man, and one might have hoped that for the sake of his many good services, his impetuosity which had led him into evil might have excused those evil acts, and that he would have been pardoned; but I am surprised at the injunction relative to Shimei, and I think it shows that, through the life of David after his restoration, there had been a rankling of the old wound, that he had never forgiven Shimei in his heart, that he regretted the pardon he had accorded him, and now, when he is dying peacefully in his bed, his chief desire is to have the old grey head of the man who years before had thrown dust and bad words at him—dabbled in blood.

It has been often wondered why Holy Scripture should so faithfully portray the faults of those whose lives are recorded. It does so for our

instruction, that we may see how even great and good men have failed, and that we may learn from their failure how to avoid those causes which injured them. An old writer tells us that it was the custom in Babylon for all the sick to be brought out into the market place, and the passers by inquired of them how they caught their malady, and what remedies they were employing to cure them. Holy Scripture brings out before us all her sick of spiritual diseases, and bids us see the occasion of their suffering, and learn how we may recover when so afflicted, and avoid those seeds of malady which have poisoned them.

Thus we ask Lucifer how it comes that he has fallen so low as hell, and he answers, I was proud, and opposed my will to that of God. We ask Cain what is the result of his fit of rage, and he answers, Murder, and a brand set on me by God. We ask Moses why he did not see the Promised Land, and he answers, I gave way to self-righteousness. We ask David how it is that he presents such a wretched spectacle of a malevolent old age, and he answers, I did not forgive heartily, but brooded over my wrong.

The care of the health of the body consists

more in prevention than in cure. All the medicine in the world will not avail us, if we do not keep out of danger. If we drink water full of impurities, we must not be surprised if we get typhoid fever. If we live over old choked drains, we must expect diptheria. If we will sit and sleep in wet clothes, we are liable to rheumatic fever. If we eat unwholesome food, we must expect to disorder our digestion. If we are sensible people we keep out of all that is dangerous to the health, and that is much better than falling ill through carelessness, and getting a doctor to patch up our health when it is broken down.

It is the same with the health of the soul. If we have lapsed into grievous sin, then we must, and we do have recourse to the Physician of souls, but it would be infinitely better for us if we had not fallen under the power of sin, for sin, once committed, though it may be cast out and forgiven, undermines the constitution of the soul. I daresay you know that if you have had measles, or scarlet fever, or rheumatic fever, though you may have recovered from that special disorder, yet it leaves behind it unpleasant consequences, a tendency to disease of another form, or the blood full of bad humours, or heart disease, or delicacy

of the lungs, or the hearing or sight affected. So is it with mortal sin, when that has been given way to, it is never thoroughly purged out of the system, but leaves a poison behind it. You see this in David, he had been at home at ease in Jerusalem when his army marched against the Ammonites. Whilst the troops were away, he lounged on his house-top, and looked about him, and saw Bathsheba, the wife of one of his gallant soldiers then in battle, and with her he committed adultery. Now you see him stained with a grievous sin. What is the result? His heart is poisoned by his wicked lust, and that vice commonly draws after it a disposition to cruelty. David had for some time been wonderfully forbearing towards Hanun, king of Ammon, although he had insulted him. He had treated him with really extraordinary gentleness. There had been two campaigns against the Ammonites, and they had been defeated utterly in both, but David would not press his victory on either occasion, because when he was in adversity the king of Ammon had shown him kindness. But after his adultery with Bathsheba, his conduct towards Ammon altered. He stormed their cities, and he put the unfortunate people to horrible, repulsive

tortures. "He put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln." That is to say, he put a whole nation to death, by sawing and chopping and burning them, men, women and children. After that David was himself chased from his kingdom, and though he repented of his adultery, and probably of his cruelty, his bitterness of heart remained, and when he was old and dying he felt that he could not sleep in his grave unless more blood was shed. I believe that he repented of his cruelty to the Ammonites for this reason, that a famine came on Israel and lasted three years, and when David enquired of the Lord the reason, he learned that it was sent because of the cruelties exercised by Saul against the Gibeonites, who were of the remnant of the Ammonites. And the famine was only allayed by the hanging of the seven sons of Saul. Now when this happened, I can hardly suppose that David did not think of his own cruelty to the Ammonites, who had so kindly treated him in the time of his distress ; and when God refused to allow him to build Him a house, because his hands were stained with blood, then, I am sure he must have felt that he had done wrong, and

he repented. Nevertheless, that butchery of the Ammonites had hardened his heart, and made it callous to human suffering, and incapable of generosity, and the old dying man, so to speak, dips his hands in blood before he can fold them in sleep.

One of the most remarkable of discoveries in modern science is that a vast number of the maladies to which mortals are heir, and which yearly sweep off thousands into their graves, are parasitic:—that is, that they are taken into the body in little seeds, and there grow like vegetables, a sort of fungus life in the veins, and that the real reason why they kill is because they, in growing, draw away from the body of the man such a supply of vigour in order to enable them to attain maturity, that they exhaust his system of the strength it requires to sustain it. A disease is like an ivy growing on a tree, it throws its myriad fibres into man's veins, and draws all the sap and nourishment to itself, and as the ivy smothers the tree on which it grows, by sucking all its goodness into its own veins, so is it with the parasitic disease.

Now mortal sin is a parasitic moral disease, when the seed has been taken into the system, it

grows and gathers strength by sapping the moral nature of its life and power of growth and development. The sinful passion is the fever, it waxes strong, while the soul declines, and unless mastered, kills the soul. But even when the disease is conquered, it leaves the moral nature debilitated, and like a convalescent man, bloodless and tottering.

Here then is a warning given to you to avoid all occasions of sin. Keep out of moral contagion, as you would out of a house where there is a pestilence. Avoid the perusal of bad books, the taking up into the mind of seeds of moral disease. They may not spring to activity all at once, but they may after a while, when circumstances predispose towards their development. "Keep innocence and do the thing that is right," says David, "and that will bring a man peace at the last." In other words, Look after the sanitary condition of all the surroundings of your soul, do not go into contaminating society, nor take into your mind seeds of evil. Keep away from them, do not stir up moral cesspools, do not sleep over moral open drains, and you will not be troubled with grave moral disorders in your old age.

Have you not noticed, in autumn, dead flies attached by their trunks to the window panes, and on the glass about them a little white cloud? I will tell you what that is. In spring the flies go over the glass, put down their trunks, and eat up whatever attracts their fancy. They come on some tasty, spicy little seeds, and they eat them, then these seeds begin to grow in the body of the fly, and send their fibres throughout the whole system, till they have completely filled it. All the fly eats goes to feed this plant and not himself, what he drinks swells the plant and not himself, his blood enriches the plant, and not himself. At last he is sick and in pain, and he flies to the window and clings to it. Then the plant thrusts out a thousand little filaments through all the pores of his body, and these burst and shoot their seeds all round him, and you see them attached to the glass as a white cloud.

Now you will understand my warning to you to avoid the seeds of sin,—foul thoughts picked up, spicy little seeds—from the newspapers, from novels, and from the conversation of your friends. Take care! they may grow in you and kill your soul, as the seed grows in and kills the fly.

SERMON XX.

EXPERIENCE.

(SS. SIMON AND JUDE'S DAY.)

ROM. v. 34.

“Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience, hope.”

It is a common remark that we are always gaining experience, but that by the time we have gained it the time for exercising it is over. That is to say, all our life-time we are making mistakes, and suffering for having done so, and becoming wiser, but the time arrives for us to depart this world when our experience is ripe. We are always ready, in mature and declining life, to offer our experience to others, but no one is willing to accept it. Advice is as common as dirt, and trampled under foot like it. No !

every man must make his own experience, he must suffer for his errors, and have the consequence of making mistakes, or doing wrong, burned into him by suffering, before he is firmly resolved to take the right course.

The whole of life is a school of experience, and the reason why it is so, is because God has given to us all free wills. If we had not free wills, the need for repentance would not exist. You will notice that the gradual setting free of the will increases the power of suffering. The mineral feels nothing and has no freedom to act.

The height attained by the animal in the scale of beings, is shown by his smaller quantity of mere instinct, that is to say, of knowledge born with him, and not learned by degrees. The higher he is, he has a greater amount of personal will, and at the same time his nerves are made finer, so as to make him more sensible to pain than inferior animals. With men the will is quite free; God places man under no restraint. He has revealed to him that the law of his happiness is obedience to the Divine Will, and what that Will is, He has also declared to Him. There God stops. He will not force any man. He leaves the will of man entirely free to obey the

law revealed, or to disobey. If man chooses to seek happiness in some other way than that God has promised to him to give it in, he may look for it there, if he likes. But God has hedged in his way with thorns, so that he is sure to suffer if he chooses to transgress. If he determines to go in one way when God says he ought to go the other, he must suffer for it, and when he has suffered, then, perhaps, he will turn back out of his own way and take God's road.

The angels were endowed also with free wills, and in the exercise of his free will, Lucifer, or Satan, rebelled. He wanted to be higher than God had placed him, and his discontent communicated itself to a host of other angels. Then they fell. Their wills had in one moment turned apart from the will of God, and the divergence thence forth became wider daily. They have suffered. The moment that they had gone against God, the fire was kindled in their consciences, and the worm began to gnaw, but they continued obstinate in their resistance, and the estrangement became daily more wide. If you take the letter V and draw the lines along, you will find they get further and further apart, and yet they started from a single point. Take the

printed capital Y. In that you see one stalk or foot, which after a while diverges into two branches, and then the two lines separate for ever. Yet in the stem both were contained as one line. So the angels' will was one with the will of God to a certain point, and then Satan and his host branched off, and have continued ever since getting further and further remote from God. I dare say you may have remarked that in the Bible, as it goes on, the Devil seems to be drawn blacker and wickedder than at first. And it is really so, every day he grows more wicked, because every day he is going further from God and good, but not only so, every day he is becoming more unhappy, because he is going further from the only line in which happiness can be found. He is for ever accumulating experience, through excruciating suffering, that he is on the wrong path, but his fierce deliberate will is hardened by pride against all turning. If it were not so, he might still be saved, any devil might be saved, by conforming his will again to the will of God, by turning into the only line in which happiness is to be found.

The Good Angels stood fast when Satan rebelled. That was their supreme moment of trial,

and that established them in eternal conformity of their wills to the will of God. Mind ! They have not given up their wills, and their wills have not been merely frozen into a right direction ; no, they are freely turned to agreement with God's will, and this because they have acquired *experience* that in this way only can they retain their first estate, and enjoy unclouded happiness. They have taken a wholesome lesson from the devils, they see them daily becoming more horrible and hateful, and miserable, and the sight of their malignity, hideousness, and wretchedness, strengthens their resolution to stand fast in the will of God. At any moment an angel might fall, by setting his will against the will of God, but it is most improbable that he should do so. In Sparta, the masters of the young used to get a slave and make him drunk, and show him in school to all the boys, rolling about and behaving in a disgusting and senseless manner, that the young Spartans might ever have a horror of drunkenness. They were taught by experience, not their own, but that of another, what a loathsome and degrading vice drunkenness is. Just so the devils are always under the eyes of the angels, and the sight of them is quite enough to take all taste

out of their mouths for following their rebellion.

We men cannot see the devils, but we can feel in ourselves, or see in others, the consequences of transgression of God's Commandments, and if we do not, then our future continuance in heaven is not secure. If we are to be safe for everlasting in Heaven, we must have good hard resolute wills to stick there, and our wills will only become good, hard, and resolute, by finding out for ourselves, or noticing in others, the bitterness of disobedience. That is what God gives suffering for. Suffering would have no place in the world, if it were not to give experience, and experience is that which straightens and confirms the will in good. We must suffer for sin either in this life, or after it is ended, and the fruit of that suffering will be such a determined will never to go astray from God's will any more, that when we do enter Heaven, nothing will induce us to leave it.

If you do not find out by experience in this life that the only way of happiness is God's way, then, after life is ended, that conviction must be burnt into you in some manner of which we know nothing certain. Hell is only for those whose wills, in spite of experience, taught by

suffering, are hardened in opposition to the will of God. If any soul, strong with remorse, were to submit, after life is ended, and meekly yield itself to the will of God, that soul would be saved, but, as S. Paul says, "so as by fire." That there will be some who will deliberately persevere in opposition, we may be sure. Alas! we see it in the world. Are there not drunkards who suffer for their drunkenness, and yet go on becoming drunk again? I knew a man who had taken to opium-eating. The doctor told him he was killing himself, and that he could not live much longer, but though he knew perfectly well every dose he took was cutting off some weeks of his life, he would persist, and he died within three years. So there are other cases of deliberate wickedness, persevered in wilfully, after all gratification by indulging in sin is gone, out of sheer love of wickedness, and I can understand such, in the soul-world going on hating truth, and honour, and purity, and though they are quite aware that they cannot get happiness in the condition they are in, yet they will not turn, and repent, and love that which is of God. I know cases of men who set themselves against the Church with a perfect frenzy of hate. They

will give themselves any trouble to do the Church harm, they will invent any lies to injure her. Now I can well believe that when death is passed, and in a new world they suddenly discover that they have been fighting against God's Church, insulting the Bride of Christ, that they will set their wills in more furious hate, and pride of protestation, against the Catholic faith, and the Sacramental system, and go on hating and raging more and more through all eternity, as they see the triumphant Church in Heavenshine with brighter splendour, and perfection of purity.

But for the generality of men it will, we may trust, not be so, either in this life, or after their souls have quitted the body, they will learn by experience to brace their feeble wills into strong resolution to keep in God's way, and to will nothing contrary to His will. Half the sins committed in this life, are committed because of the weakness of the will, so this weak will must be made strong. A feeble will, blown about by caprice in Eternal Life, would be always liable to fall, and therefore it must become strong before it enters Heaven, and that strength it will never acquire, save by having burnt into it by suffering, that it must be resolute and resolute

in persistence in the course marked out for it by God. This strength it must acquire, and it can acquire it only in one way. If it does not acquire it in this world, it must later, in some manner not revealed to us.

S. Paul says, that tribulation works patience, that is, when a man has done wrong and suffers for it, the first thing he learns is to bear his punishment patiently, knowing he has deserved it, and the next thing he gains is experience, he resolves never to sin in the same way again, and that works in him the hope that he may with a strong resolution persevere in Good. And S. Peter (1 Peter v. 10) prays for all those to whom his first epistle is addressed, and for you who read it, that God "who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, may make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." You see now his meaning. God hath called us to His glory, but it lies in our free wills to accept His call, therefore S. Peter prays that He may strengthen, establish, and settle our wills in right by suffering, and the experience gained by suffering will perfect us, and enable us to live eternally with unwavering wills rightly directed, in the Kingdom of the Resurrection.

SERMON XXI.

SELF-CONQUEST.

(ALL SAINTS' DAY.)

REV. VII. 13.

“What are these that are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”

WHEN Christopher Columbus was on his voyage across the Atlantic, in quest of the New World, after a long time his shipmates murmured, and became very discontented, and at last there were threats of mutiny. They were frightened at being so long at sea, sailing in an unknown ocean, and seeing no land. They came to Columbus and told him they would go no further, all beyond was uncertain, go back they would. Then Columbus pointed up at some birds. “Look,” said he, “in which direction are they flying?” And they saw

some birds aloft winging their way in the same direction in which he was sailing. "Now," said he, "you may be sure that there is land yonder, whither those birds are flying."

Well, my brethren, we sometimes feel a little out at heart with our journey, and doubtful, perhaps, which way it will end, and when we are so, there come to us the Saints' Days, and we look up and see the Blessed Ones hastening before us, sometimes singly as S. Andrew, or S. John, sometimes in pairs, as SS. Philip and James, or SS. Simon and Jude, and to-day a whole flock goes by to the Promised Land, and we know it is not very far off, and pluck up courage and continue our voyage.

The whole secret of sanctity consists in this, the Conquest of Self. The Saints are those who overcame their passions and the world, they have won heaven because they have won the victory which is the hardest of all to win, over themselves.

When Balaam went to the top of Peor, and lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel abiding in his tents, he took up his parable, and said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be as his."

There are a great many who are like Balaam. They lift up their eyes and see the bright host of the Saints in Paradise, they see the Holy Church, in which they have been trained, and they say, "How goodly is the Church and how fair the heavenly tabernacle—I should like to die the death of the righteous, and have my lot with the Saints in glory."

But though Balaam admired Israel, and had such excellent wishes, he fought against Israel, and he died in battle against the people of God. And the reason of this apostasy from what he knew was right was entirely due to his having acquired no power over himself. He was drawn away by lust of honour and wealth; he was a vain, ambitious, and avaricious man, and his vanity, his greed of honours and of money, pulled him away from his sense of duty and his knowledge of right.

It is so with a great many others. They have the best intentions; but when we come to look at their practice,—it is nothing. Every whim, every passion, every allurements of the world draws them away. They may have a sentimental admiration for the company of the Saints, but they have no moral right to be of their com-

munion ; they may wish to die the death of the righteous, but they have not the smallest taste for living the life of one.

Now nothing is more necessary for attainment of a crown of glory in the heavens, than earnestness. It is not to be gained without a serious purpose of doing so. "The Kingdom of Heaven," said Our Lord, "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm" (Matt. xi. 12.). That means, if Heaven is to be won, it must be fought for with a determination to have it, and a readiness to suffer all rather than lose it. Philip of Macedon, when he heard what a beautiful city Athens was, exclaimed, "That city I will have, I will take it either by sword or by gold." Now the Heavenly city is to be taken only by a fight, a hard and a life-long fight, and it is no trifling matter. And the fight is more against self than against any external enemy.

When God made man, He gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. But Adam forgot in the exercise of his authority, to obtain dominion over himself,—if he had acquired that, he would never have

fallen. Because he had not, he was led astray by his wife's persuasion, and ate of the forbidden fruit. That first neglect of Adam to lay the bit and bridle upon self has to be redressed by his descendants. He lost Paradise by this, and his descendants can only regain it by rectifying his error. If Paradise is to be won, if the flaming sword of the Cherubim is to be sheathed to let them pass, they must produce token at the gate that they have acquired that dominion over self which Adam had not taken the trouble to gain, in consequence whereof he was cast out. Unfortunately, few are to be found who do not find it irksome to attempt the least thing for the Kingdom of Heaven ; they do, not what they ought, but whatever their desires draw them into ; they make no attempt to master themselves. It is all very well to say to them, You must do this, you must avoid that, you must give up such a bad habit. The answer comes, "It is impossible : I cannot do it." What does that mean, but that they are slaves to their passions or their caprices ;—that they do not even pretend to any dominion over themselves ?

God orders in His Gospel the mastery over self, and you say, That is impossible. Is God a tyrant

to order impossibilities to be executed by His slaves? Look up to-day at the Saints, these have done what you pretend you cannot. They have all conquered themselves. And if they have been able to do so, why not you?

Were the Saints of marble, and not of flesh and blood as you are? Had they not temptations and trials as you have? They conquered. Why not you?

You do not, because you are not in earnest. You do not want to conquer, but to be conquered. There is in you no hearty desire to gain Heaven, only a sentimental maundering after it. You are Balaams, and nothing better.

When Constantinople was taken by the Turks, the Sultan Mahomet found a beautiful Greek girl named Irene, and was fascinated by her charms. He could not endure to be out of her society, and he neglected the affairs of state that he might talk to her. Then his brother went to him, and said, "If you are going to live as a slave to a beautiful girl, resign the Sultanate to me, act as a king, or give up the empty title." "Very well," said Mahomet, "Let all my court assemble, and you shall hear my decision." Then when all were gathered together, he mounted his

throne, and gave orders that the beautiful Irene should be introduced. She was led in, and he shewed her to all present. "Is she not so beautiful," he said, "that she deserves the love of such as me?" then he stepped down from his throne, drew his sword, and with one stroke cut off her head.

This horrible story has this merit in it, that it shows in the vile Turk a power of conquest over himself. Rather than lose his honour as king he sacrificed his passion, he cut off the occasion of his forgetfulness of the duties that pertained to his station. We are Christians, heirs of the kingdom of Heaven, called to reign with Christ ; but we must first conquer ourselves, we must shew that we are not the slaves of passion, and drawn away from duty by every allurements the world offers. Without that, we are unworthy of our calling, we cannot be fit to sit with those whose whole life was a struggle against, and mastery of, self.

It is a common saying that a baby is the master in a house, it is tyrannous and exacting. It expects to have everything its own way, everything it wants, and a great deal that it does not want, and if its will be resisted in its most wan-

ton caprices, it fills the house with its screams, and goes into a paroxysm of fury. From infancy the child has to learn to command itself. It has to be taught that if it cries for the moon it must do without it, and that if it insists on playing with fire it will burn its fingers. Every year, as it grows older, it acquires more control over itself, over its wishes, over its temper, and this gradual self-conquest ought to go on through life. It is never pleasant to have to do without that on which one has set the heart, but the experience of life teaches us that we must submit to disappointment, whether we like it or not. The saints were mortals like us, we all started alike as fretful tyrannical babies, wanting everything, imperious over those with whom we come in contact, but the difference between them and us consists in this, that they, early, acquired perfect mastery over themselves, and our mastery over ourselves is very imperfect. They gained it by an exercise of the free will, we gain it grudgingly, only as it is forced upon us.

A man who gives way to his passion is a piteous object. Passion is said to be a temporary insanity, and so it is, it disturbs his reason, which ought to sit sovereign over his actions and keep

them in control. A man may become a perfect slave to his passions, and then every new passion that arises draws him along whither it will.

But a man may also be a prey to his caprices, and if a man who is governed by his passions be a lamentable object, one who is carried this way or that by his fancies is a contemptible object. The man whom everyone respects is he who is able to control himself, so that when passion arises it never is allowed to gain the upper hand, and when he feels a wish, only gratifies it if his judgment approves. I have told you more than once, that the only direction in which happiness can be found is in conformity to the will of God. The great reason why, through life, we should strive to master ourselves is, that we may be able always to submit to the Will of God, to be able to say "Thy Will, not mine, be done."

THE END.



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